CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1:

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0   Introduction

This study sets out to examine the extent to which there might be differences in the way women and men interact in management meetings by inspecting carefully the ways in which they manage conversation and present, align and negotiate their professional identities, and the conditions and contexts under which any differences occur. The research is based on a case study of management meetings in four Zimbabwean companies.

This chapter serves as overall background to the study. I begin by defining briefly interactional sociolinguistics which is the overarching framework for the field of investigation. I then provide a rationale for the study. This is followed by the statement of aims and research questions. After this, I provide a brief account of some relevant historical and current perspectives on the business context in Zimbabwe as background and situational context. This is followed by a brief exposition of a selection of literature on some of the more pertinent issues related to the area of study: talk and gender in public settings, gender dynamics at the workplace and language and gender.

1.1   Area of investigation

The study, as just stated, is positioned in the field of interactional sociolinguistics. Gumperz, (1999) notes that this field has its origins in the search for replicable methods of qualitative sociolinguistic analysis that can provide insights into the linguistic and cultural diversity characteristic of today's communicative environments. Interactional sociolinguistics, as a theoretical framework of study, looks critically at talk between interactants and the way in which any interactional encounter provides a useful basis for studying social relations of power which may become evident through patterns of turn-taking, producer-addressee role relationships, intentionality and conversational inferencing. Talk at work is complex, involving a wide range of levels of meaning which can be better understood through the fine-grained analysis of discourse within its broader context (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). This

becomes possible when wider contextual knowledge (namely the social and physical framework, the behavioural environment, language as context and the extra-situational context) is combined with the study of discourse, to shed light on the interpretive processes of interaction. Interactional sociolinguistics as a theoretical framework therefore allows for the study of discourse to be embedded in wider contexts and within an ethnographic enterprise (see 3.0 and 4.3.3 for a fuller account). Interactional sociolinguistics has consequently emerged as a field of study to take account of, among other disciplines, the wider context of institutional practices and ideologies.

The study, which falls under a sub-discipline of communication studies called organisational communication (Mumby and Clair, 2000), seeks to investigate how women and men use language as they interact in senior management meetings at corporate level in Zimbabwe. In particular, the study sets out to explore how specific linguistic choices and practices are deployed by men and women engaged in talk-in-interaction, for the accomplishment of various functions and, more specifically, for the positioning of ideas in management meetings at the workplace. Such meetings held at the workplace are sites of social as well as power politics, as participants continually define and redefine their identities and situation as part of ongoing interaction. The social standing and relative power of participants in an encounter, in this instance in meetings, is reflected in the way co-interactants make use of linguistic resources and conventions (interactional mechanisms) available to them to align their ideas for particular effect. Analyses of talk-in-interaction are therefore embedded in studies of the conversation mechanisms that help produce both the order and meaning of an interaction. As Schegloff (1999) points out, interactional sociolinguists should address themselves to resources and practices from and by which speakers co-construct interaction. If interaction is produced within a matrix of turns organised into sequences, then it is through these that motives and intentions are inferred, identities made relevant, orientations and stances projected, and the relevance of gender in talk made evident.

Earlier studies in language and gender (e.g. Lakoff, 1973) seem to point to the fact that there are a number of linguistic resources that might be central to constructing identities and relations, and for present purposes, gendered discourse positions. This seems to suggest that concerns with how men or women say what they say are synonymous with an examination of how gender norms are recycled in talk. Every individual has a verbal repertoire of his or her own, defined by Platt and Platt (1975:75) as 'the linguistic varieties that are at a particular

speaker's disposal.' My study focuses on the repertoire of individuals, and specifically on those choices they make in well-defined circumstances with the aim of explaining how these individuals on either side of the gender divide, use linguistic choices to bond themselves to others and align their speech to serve their intent in very subtle ways. This is particularly significant in meetings where the main objective of participants is to influence outcomes.

Furthermore, the study concerns itself with how people communicate with others in the workplace context to express certain viewpoints to best effect, to make proposals, query certain ideas and agree with others. Co-interactants do not therefore only 'make moves', they also 'take positions'. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:6) propose that there are essentially two distinct but intertwined aspects of discourse positioning. On the one hand, speakers can position themselves with regard to the content: they can decide on the degree of force with which to put forward ideas and projects and they can also modulate ideas in response to actual or anticipated reactions of others. On the other hand, speakers can position themselves vis-à-vis the others with whom they are engaged as the discourse progresses. This can be done by wholly or partially agreeing or disagreeing with the propositions put forward by interlocutors. Appropriate positioning of ideas is crucial as the value of a person's utterance on the 'ideas market' lies in the fate of the utterance made; on whether it is simply noted or picked up, debated, acted upon or repeated by others (Bourdieu, 1977b). What happens to an idea seems to depend largely on the language in which it is framed, so that a relatively insignificant idea can be transformed into one that may command attention in powerful circles. Positioning resources include, among others, the adoption of opening up or backing down strategies, deference stances, markers showing degree of engagement, support-enlisting mechanisms and degree of directness of speech. Discursive positions are often tied to cultural contexts, social as well as work situations, and they are seldom completely gender and power neutral. Bourdieu's (1977a) observation implies that the right linguistic choice, like the right business connections or address (FGD respondent, Fiona), can facilitate access to positions and situations of societal power and the 'wrong' variety can block such access. Conversational interaction then, is a complex production of talk as interactants take account of each other's co-presence and contribution to work out both the meaning and significance of the utterance and the encounter itself.

The study will explore how and why interactants, both male and female, align their contributions in management meetings by analysing 'how they say what they say' in terms of

a number of approaches, but primarily conversation analysis (hereafter CA), critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) and pragmatics. It is argued that these approaches should allow for a critical analysis of 'the connection between language, power and ideology in a way which focuses upon linguistic elements and which sets out to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system', (Fairclough, 1989:5). The approach also provides a reliable means of tracking the ways in which individuals present and negotiate their professional, social and gender identities, and enables the analyst to attend to the meanings and interpretations of the participants that then become observable in the data (Schegloff, 1997). For instance, the identities and roles of participants at a meeting can become very obvious in data when interactants choose to make their power in relation to others in the workplace quite explicit. A typical example of an utterance by a participant in a position of higher authority might include explicit assertions of authority realised by direct strategies, including imperative statements, which could be expressed in different ways, for example: *I intend to resolve this issue in this meeting*. A more junior member of staff may express the same intention in a less emphatic manner, for example: *We might consider dealing with this matter as soon as possible*. The identities and relative power of the speakers in either case should become evident in the linguistic forms used to construct those identities.

The observations above, which help define the area of study, derive from a number of scholars and from the interviews I conducted to assist in formulating the research questions. For the sociolinguistic researcher, exploring a number of variables that might be characteristic of a given situation under study calls for a methodology that would allow hypotheses to emerge from naturalistic data. In order to achieve this, a case study design as method of research was the preferred option.

1.2   Rationale

In the following section, I justify my interest in studying the way women and men as interactants in management meetings express their ideas and views in business meetings. The ability to talk effectively in meetings has the potential of enhancing the status, credibility and authority of the speaker and an examination of how women, in particular, present themselves

in meetings becomes more relevant in a situation where their presence in top level meetings has been, until recently, uncommon.

Since the attainment of independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, more women have been climbing the corporate ladder to join the upper echelons of those traditionally responsible for making major decisions in business organisations. To date, however, no study based on the analysis of discourse has examined how these women, compared with their male counterparts, position their ideas in meetings at the workplace. Meetings have specifically been identified as sites of workplace discourse engagement, as they require participants to draw on and shift between different role categories, identities and modes of talk. Meetings can also be viewed as a public context where talk is highly valued because of its high information content.

Operating at management level is synonymous with 'doing power' and often involves giving orders, regulating resources, discussing problems and solving them. The particular choice of linguistic means for expressing these speech functions in a given interactional context will often reflect the orientation of the personalities involved in the interaction and can also lead to a misunderstanding and misjudgement of the speaker's intention and how they are perceived. Talk at this level also provides the means through which power can be exercised, developed, maintained, enhanced or lost. Women's language styles have in the past been controversially judged as less competent compared to those of their male counterparts, as evidenced in earlier research (see, Coates, 1993; Lakoff, 1973 for overviews of such assessments). This implies that there is some standard of conversation performance on the basis of which women's conversation practices are frequently evaluated. Such opinions can be invoked to justify the exclusion of many women from powerful spheres of influence, and to discredit the contributions of those few who are not excluded.

An exploration of how and why both women and men align their contributions in management meetings will provide a valuable means of tracking the ways in which individuals negotiate their social identities (including gender), as well as their professional identities. By examining the interaction of men and women, this study should also obtain a more subtle view of the differences, if at all, in their linguistic strategies.

There is scope therefore to examine women's and men's communicative behaviours in decision-making meetings at the workplace with a view to gaining insight into how some of

the implications of verbal interactions might be interpreted in a research study. The current study is unique in the Zimbabwean context as it sets out to probe the situation in new and changing work sites, where the norm of meetings is male established and women have only recently started to enter the corporate world at this level. Understanding the communication strategies of the 'other' is of paramount importance if men and women in management meetings are to work together effectively, particularly in a situation where debate has a direct bearing on economic productivity.

The first part of the title of my thesis (What Men Say, How Women Say:), makes a general assumption that men speak in ways that are different to how women speak. Based on the preliminary interviews conducted in order to sharpen the focus of my research interest, it was noted that men tended to concern themselves more with the issues under discussion, the *what* of debate, and that how they aligned their contributions was secondary to the pre-eminence of the point made. They were therefore inclined to use more direct speech, and concrete strategies, including demonstrative behaviour. Women, on the other hand, appeared to be more concerned with the *how* of communication, preferring, it seemed, to structure and align their contributions through use of more dependent, indirect and inclusive strategies to influence others. The description of interactional mechanisms will be extended to include reference to non-verbal interactional behaviour where deemed necessary.

1.3   Aims of the research

This research seeks to make contributions to existing knowledge in the field of interactional sociolinguistics and the aims of the research can be conceived of in terms of three general levels: the theoretical-methodological, the descriptive, and the applied.

Aims of research at the theoretical-methodological level

At the theoretical-methodological level, the study aims to make a contribution towards further understanding of the extent to which gender is a significant variable in interactional sociolinguistic research. The research also aims to influence the development of theory, by showing how a linguistic description of data informed by CA and pragmatics can, if contexualised in terms of CDA, generate a more explanatory account of what is going on

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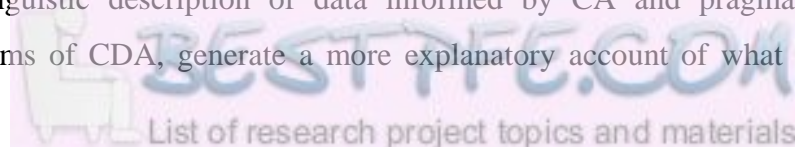
during a verbal encounter, which will result in the production of a multi-layered explanation of the dynamics of a given interactional context.

Given the view that outcomes of research based on talk text are likely to be multifaceted and difficult to capture adequately within a single theory, I adopted an inclusive and blended methodology for this exploratory research. The research aims to show how the three approaches of CA, pragmatics and CDA can be used in combination with various ethnographic methods, including focus group discussions (FGDs), to examine how members of a given society carry out conversation. A qualitative ethnographic research design will further facilitate the investigation of interactional patterns, as I seek to evaluate the three theoretical frameworks used to describe and explain women's and men's verbal behaviour. The emphasis is on close analysis of interactional data examined within a research paradigm that views some of the workplace practices as embedded in wider social and historical contexts. This is likely to help illuminate the role of gender in interaction.

Based primarily on four case studies, this enquiry seeks to contribute to existing theory on research methodology by examining workplace practices from the inside and doing what Cameron et.al (1992) describe as researching *on*, researching *for* and researching *with* participants, in the ethno-methodological sense. This approach to research will enable the analyst to come away with 'explanations grasped from the inside in the very moment of their accomplishment' (Bourdieu, 1977a:3), as displayed by the understandings between participants in the immediate interactional context.

Aims of research at the descriptive level

At a descriptive level, in other words, with respect to the description and analysis of a particular situation, I aim to make a contribution to research directed at exploring the significance of gender in interaction by analysing the discourse of men and women in top-level management meetings.

The research is conducted at four work sites in Zimbabwe; in itself something of a breakthrough, as the world of commerce and industry rarely allows an outsider and a possible agent of change, to look into the very hub of their businesses. After extended negotiations during which I stressed the value of research of this nature to the world of business, and after

presentation of a number of certified letters of proof of credentials and assurances of confidentiality on my part, I was granted access to top level meetings in corporate boardrooms in order to acquire first hand information on what goes on in there. Management meetings in a relatively emergent economy, and driven by the new black business elite, in a changing social culture in relation to gender, should provide interesting data, which should point to possible areas of replication of the study in similar sites of engagement. I was therefore privileged to be able to experience and record interactions in this relatively under-researched site. Even globally, there is a relatively small number of studies that have involved researchers going into organisations and studying first hand organisational discourse at management level and juxtapositioning men and women.

Aims of research at the applied level

At an applied level, it is hoped that the findings of the research could be used to inform studies in the field of applied linguistics and more specifically, the form and content of language for specific purposes (LSP) programmes in both vocational and academic institutions. In addition, the study could be of value to business faculties from the point of view of training, as the findings should provide useful insights into the importance of language in conveying meaning at the workplace. More importantly, because language and communication programmes rarely feature in training at the workplace, owing to the lack of appreciation of their role and link to power, women, being in the minority, can experience considerable difficulty in having their ways of communicating accepted as legitimate. The research aims therefore to seek ways to explain how men and women use language in spheres of influence and to show that each is valid.

Research questions

The research questions that guided this enquiry derive from the aims outlined above. These were based on the core question of the thesis, namely: how do men and women use various interactional mechanisms in senior management meetings in the positioning of their ideas. The questions were drawn from the recurrent themes that were compiled into the two macroareas (discussed in Chapter 5) that typically represent participants' verbal performance. These are:

i) How do men and women manage conversation in management meetings? (More specifically, how do those in managerial positions use discourse strategies to negotiate speaking turns, control topics of discussion and monitor talk in meetings?)

ii) How do men and women present themselves in management meetings? (More specifically how do interactants, through the way they use language, construct and manage professional identities and maintain their role status and relationships in meetings?)

The two broad questions above are considered also in the context of the relationship between language, power and gender.

The research, based on the assumption that there might be differences in the language used by men and women in meetings also sets out to discover the possible explanations for the differences that might exist in the way men and women speak.

1.4   A historical synopsis of the corporate landscape in Zimbabwe

A brief analysis of the history of corporate culture in Zimbabwe serves as bedrock for the research underway. Zimbabwe achieved its independence from Britain in 1980. Prior to the attainment of independence, the successive Rhodesian governments had, as a matter of policy and for self-interest, actively practised discrimination against a large percentage of its citizens on the basis of race and gender. One consequence of this was that they did not invest resources in the education and training of blacks. The rationale behind this was that blacks, as a matter of course, were expected to occupy semi-skilled to unskilled jobs in the factories, mines and on farms (Raftopolous, 1987).

The few blacks that acquired higher education did so mainly through missionary schools. Such schools, however, by virtue of their ideological framework, which emphasised that men were the given heads of families and society, tended to foster gender separation and stereotyping, in keeping with the dictates of the patriarchal society within which they operated. The type of education and mindset at the time, which promoted a skills-based

curriculum, therefore excluded the few educated blacks from occupying managerial and professional jobs in both the private and public sectors, and instead channelled them into service jobs like teaching and nursing and hands-on jobs like carpentry, factory work and small-scale farming. The few that were in business were in the small business sector running grocery shops and butcheries. For black women, the discrimination was double-edged. Before 1980, black women were ranked last in any hierarchy in which white, Asian, coloured and black male counterparts enjoyed better privileges over their female counterparts (Chipunza, 2003:3).

At independence, in an attempt to address the imbalances, the new government instituted laws which signalled its commitment to equal opportunity, for example, the 1985 Labour Regulations Act, which made it illegal to discriminate against any person in employment on the basis of colour, creed, gender or religious affiliation. In further attempts to bring equality to the sexes, Zimbabwe became signatory to various declarations, conventions and protocols aimed at creating an enabling environment for the attainment of equality between women and men. These include the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), SADC Declaration on Gender, International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and the Beijing Declaration. Legislation does not, however, necessarily change people's attitudes and beliefs. According to figures published by the Chamber of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI, 2004) men continue to be the fundamental power brokers in corporate life as they own and run most economic institutions and outnumber women at senior management levels (100 to 1) at a level where resources are regulated, problems are solved and real influence and power is played out.

In any given workplace, shared norms and values result in the emergence of a distinct corporate culture which in turn impacts decisively on the daily activities and facets of any organisation, including communication. The organisational cultures that prevail in most corporations in Zimbabwe are modelled after what Kanter (1977) refers to as a western male managerial ethos. Prior to the attainment of independence in Zimbabwe, most corporate boards were predominantly white, with males in the majority, as most of the larger economic institutions were owned and run by white males (Strachan, 1994).

In the late seventies, because of the war situation, many gaps were appearing in management structures and white females and a few hand-picked black males were being appointed into these vacant positions. At independence, and soon after, a few more university educated black

males were invited or recruited into managerial and corporate positions and others to sit on some of the boards. These were measures aimed at, in part, filling the gaps created by the mass exodus of whites at the time, as well as to fit in with the new dispensation. The first crop of male black managers in corporate positions were assimilated into the culture of the majority as they were shown the ropes and learnt how things were 'done' on the job. The phenomenon of mentoring, and other facilitators to entry into managerial positions such as networking, meant that black males were exposed to western-based business environments and a particular speech community much earlier than their more recently initiated female counterparts. As women began to climb the rungs of the corporate ladder, a kind of hybrid culture developed, one that was influenced by a socio-political initiative whose primary goal was the eradication of sexist practices. However, language and communication issues rarely feature in affirmative action programmes. This is because the role of language and communication, and their link to power, are often poorly understood.

It is also true to say that the nature and structure of workplace communication is often based on the communication culture of the more powerful group (in Zimbabwe, mainly male). Minorities (including women) experience considerable difficulties in having their ways of communicating accepted as legitimate. In the case of women, the double standard principle is often at work: if women do not speak like their male colleagues and do not use the same interactional tactics, they are not listened to or are seen as ineffective communicators. If they do adopt male ways of speaking, their femininity is seriously questioned. A few female respondents in the focus group discussions (FDGs) that formed part of my research method (see 4.2.5 and 5.5) commented on how they had often been confused and were not sure about how they should present themselves in meetings.

Another lingering aspect of western organisational culture, noted during the preliminary interviews, is that the personality of the managers in these organisations plays a critical role in the success of any operation. Society, according to Gaidzanwa (1985) and Manwa (2002), prescribes specific role behaviours that are deemed appropriate for each gender. Females are expected to be submissive, gentle and nurturing, while males are expected to be aggressive and direct in approach. These role behaviours are further reinforced by traditional African male culture, which precludes females from taking on an active role in many forums that are traditionally considered to be the domain of males, for example, marriage negotiations or ritual preparations. No woman, for example, sits at the traditional Shona *padare,* a forum

where issues affecting the wellbeing of the family or tribe are debated. The prescribed female personality nurtured through years of acculturation is therefore at variance with what is commonly perceived as suitable for participating in or managing organisations (Manwa, 2002).

Other management practices in corporate business are roughly in line with what takes place elsewhere in the business world. Zimbabwe has many trading partners and must therefore adopt the systems in use in many other organisations. There are of course differences in the activities and methods of operation of the various forms of business organisations. There will also be differences between business organisations of the same type, for example, in relation to their size and scale of activities and operations, as well as composition of boards. These differences, as between one business organisation and another, are largely only a matter of degree and emphasis. This similarity makes it possible for research to be carried out in a number of different companies as one seeks to find out whether the claims made about the differences in speech styles between men and women conducted elsewhere, will yield the same findings in new and changing worksites.

1.5 Talk and gender in formal contexts: an overview

Talk in public formal contexts arguably has a marked social and political function as contributions generally have status-enhancing potential. At the workplace, interactions are seldom neutral in terms of power. In addition, discourse in formal situations is often subject to a number of constraints on, for example, topic, on relevance, and the type of routines and talk exchanges that may take place (Fairclough, 1989a). Formal situations are themselves characterised by an exceptional orientation to and marking of position, status and 'face'. Because meetings are 'the most important and visible sites of organisational power' (Mumby, 1988:68), interactants in the boardroom are compelled to use language in a particular way to enact and validate their professional expertise, as a means of demonstrating their power and role status. In addition, senior management meetings are by their nature sites of interpersonal struggle, confrontation and public display of expertise where interactants employ various strategies to maintain roles, orientations and identities in an arena where the value of a contribution is weighed and judged and opinions of the other formed. In meetings involving professionals and where interlocutors are constantly involved in some kind of social and

political struggle, certain ways of talking therefore become important. Van Dijk (1993a) refers to them as 'power relevant' discourse structures, arguing that high-level competence in the use of specific communicative resources facilitates access to opportunities within a given locus. Participants in an interaction are therefore, through their social behaviour, and especially through their discourse (verbal behaviour), engaged in a dynamic process of power play.

Studies of formal contexts such as conferences (Swaker, 1979), seminars (Holmes, 1988; Holmes and Stubbe, 1984) and formal meetings (e.g. Edelsky, 1981; Graddol and Swann, 1989; Schink Case, 1988; Woods, 1988), have demonstrated that there are marked differences between men's and women's communication behaviours and speech styles in these contexts. These have however been largely based on studies conducted in the west on white middle-class adults. In these studies, it has emerged that in general, and there being no reason why any one of the interactants should talk any more than the other, men tend to take more frequent and longer turns than women. One explanation which has been given for male domination of the talking time in more formal contexts is that women are more concerned with solidarity (Gillian, 1982; Tannen, 1990), while men are more interested in status, power and 'one upmanship'. Commonly noted features of female talk, such as attentive listening noted through the offering of minimal responses and offering of responsive feedback and agreeing, reflect concern for others and help strengthen relationships (Coates, 1988; Edelsky, 1981; Holmes, 1990; Schink Case, 1988). Male talk, on the other hand, appears to focus on dominating others by often making challenging utterances, controlling topics, disagreeing more vehemently and in a more assertive manner, and disrupting others in their talk, often taking away the turn of the other and thus dominating talking time (Schink Case, 1988; Tannen,1990). Male talk has thus been characterised as typically competitive, argumentative and verbally aggressive.

The male strategies discussed above also serve the purpose of asserting power and status in the contexts cited above, in keeping with the view that effective talk in public is one strategy for achieving status in a group. Analysis of typical female ways of interacting in both private and public spheres has, on the other hand, identified features which can be described as 'cooperative', 'facilitative' and 'other' oriented. Holmes (1992) and Tannen (1999) further contend that women tend to be process-oriented where men are more task- or product-oriented. Women are also described as being more tentative, consensus-seeking, detailed,

descriptive and responsive and prefer deferential, less forceful language, and thus appear less powerful. Men, they contend, are more comfortable with referential or information-oriented talk, and are said to be more willing to contribute in public formal contexts where this kind of talk is used. Women, on the other hand, are supposed to be more comfortable with talking to one another or in small groups (Coates, 1988) and are said to be more concerned with affective talk and social coherence than men are. These are, however, stereotypical examples and as Holmes, Stubbe and Vine (1999) claim, stereotyping of the two genders may be viewed as an attempt to bring some 'consistency and predictability', however simple, into any study that attempts to trace patterns of human behaviour. However, the reality is that the interpretation and judgements of perceived behaviour, including interactional behaviour, may be different depending on the gender of the individual. While these features are widely attested in the literature surveyed, there is some disagreement over the cause. One explanation for these apparently inconsistent observations can be arrived at by looking at the immediate and wider contexts: historical, situational, cultural and social in which the data has been collected, and the different purposes of the talk. As Holmes (1992) herself admits, these are clearly broad generalisations and it is always possible to find exceptions. What needs to happen now, as suggested by Ige and De Kadt (2002), is for linguists to move away from 'broad pronouncements' as to how women and men use linguistic and discursive practices, towards detailed investigations of noted behaviours in identified contexts. What seems to emerge however is that gender-role socialisation is a significant variable in the discussion of interactional sociolinguistics.

In formal and public contexts such as meetings, seminars and conferences, discussed in, for example, Eakins and Eakins (1979), Edelsky (1981) and Schink Case (1988), talk has, in fact, an important function well beyond the utterance itself as it is used primarily to influence outcomes. While conveying information may appear to be the primary function of talk in such formal and public contexts, it also has a social function, to signal and possibly increase the status of the speaker. Holmes (1992:132-135) calls it *valued* talk since effective contributions on the 'ideas market' clearly have the potential of increasing significantly a person's status, so that much of the talk in these contexts can be described as 'expository, as it is an exposition of facts and/or opinions'. Also, by virtue of the context, it is usually *display* talk, as it affords the speaker the opportunity to display what they know, giving credence to the claim that 'from a social point of view, expository talk is potentially status-enhancing *valued* talk'.

Talk in such valued contexts can also be exploratory. Barnes (1976:28) defines exploratory talk as talk that allows people to explore and develop their ideas through the joint negotiation of meaning. Holmes (1992:135), in contrast to what she describes as 'valued' talk, because of its status-enhancing nature, describes exploratory talk as 'valuable' talk as it is 'cognitively valuable as a means of coming to grips with new concepts and integrating them with new knowledge.' She argues that it is also 'cognitively valuable as a means of thinking through the implications of proposals on which decisions for future actions can be based'. Given the nature of meetings, it seems obvious that the two modes of talk are in operation side by side depending on the type and purpose of the meeting. Talk could move from exposition alone towards a fuller engagement of co-participants leading to an understanding of difficult issues, for example, and towards the exploration and development of the ideas being discussed. High-level meetings are themselves, likely to be both exploratory and highly discursive in nature. The same type of meetings that deal with problem solving and the marketing of ideas by participants are likely to involve exploratory interaction that is essentially collaborative. Successful collaboration, as described by Tannen (1984), is based primarily on the use of facilitative devices such as soliciting contributions from others, providing supporting feedback, extending others' contributions, and disagreeing in a non-confrontational manner. By way of contrast, Barnes and Todd (1977:72) note that 'competing for the floor during a meeting, belittling, rejecting and baldly disagreeing with others' contributions' and overt challenges are all talk strategies which rarely encourage further discussion and exploration of the area of disagreement, resulting in less effective discussion.

In addition, aggressively negative questioning leads people to take up entrenched positions – especially when they risk losing face. Those attacked tend to respond defensively and little cognitive progress is made. On the other hand, facilitative talk strategies which include supportive elicitations and questions, passing of speaking rights, waiting for a turn, and owning the floor when speaking, appear to encourage participants to pursue ideas and elaborate their reasons for holding a particular position. This in turn, according to Holmes (1992), allows for the tabled issues to be more fully explored, arguments to be more explicitly justified and increased levels of understanding of the issues to be reached, resulting in a better thought-through outcome.

The line of argument above seems to suggest that the outcomes of talk in public fora are influenced mainly by how successfully speakers manage ongoing conversation. Conversation management in essence refers to a participant's control over conversation, what is discussed,

and how the debate is conducted (Coulthard, 1977). It also refers to how interactants can in turn operate on the same wavelength (Edelsky, 1981) as they work out and develop meaning and common understanding through the co-construction of an idea, an achievement requiring considerable dexterity. Local management of talk in public speaking spaces is therefore crucial. For that reason, conversation analysis as an area of study seeks to investigate the nature and form of interactional structure and to establish how control over conversation is achieved by participants. Consequently, conversation management which is primarily an analysis of turn and floor (explained more fully in 3.2), can be analysed on the basis of technical definition of turn structure and participant engagement to understand 'what is going on' in one-at-a-time type of conversation.

An additional factor that influences the outcomes of talk is to do with how speakers demonstrate their roles and promote their status through the way they present their ideas and opinions and how the same are perceived. Studies focusing on the behavioural characteristics of men and women (Tannen, 1990 and West, 1995) have suggested that how men and women present themselves in an interactional process is an important factor which has a significant bearing on what happens to an utterance. How men and women present themselves, what Fairclough, (1993) terms 'promotional discourse' in an ongoing interaction, is largely governed by how one perceives oneself and is accomplished in conjunction with a perception of the 'other.' This in turn determines the verbal behaviour of the respondent. Self-presentation, it has been argued, involves rhetoric that moves cautiously between a creative discourse and that of the profession and can take on many forms, ranging from choice of syntax, to include a speaker's demeanour, style and voice projection (Goffman, 1959). Self-presentation therefore operates at a subtle level and is not always visible at the surface level of talk, as alignments of talk can, when scrutinised beyond alternative formulations, reveal potentially negative presentations of the 'other.' West (1995) argues that this is complicated further by the fact that how men and women present themselves and view others is largely affected by the subtle teachings of one's culture and pervading influence of the context of interaction giving rise to particular relations of power. Fairclough (1989a:1) argues further that 'sociolinguistic conventions used [in interaction] have a dual relation to power: on the one hand they incorporate differences of power, on the other hand, they arise out of - and give rise to particular relations of power'.

From a theoretical perspective, there is therefore room to examine more closely, the noted differences in the way that men and women as interactants in management meetings use various interactional mechanisms in talk-in-interaction to play out their roles and identities as they position what they say in a particular way for intended meaning and effect.

1.6   Gender dynamics in the workplace

The dynamics of talk at the workplace and more specifically in the boardroom can be more clearly understood by looking at the gender dimension within the institution. This section reviews, in particular, the position and status of women as the 'other' in a situation where men, as viewed in the historical context, are regarded as the norm reference point. According to Mullins (1999), one's initial perception and classification of another individual starts with the identification of his or her gender. Alvesson and Billig (1977) suggest that applying a gender perspective on an issue such as the one under study implies analysing the importance, meaning and consensus of what is culturally defined as male or masculine as well as female or feminine ways of thinking and knowing, feeling, valuing, and expressing themselves. They further claim that understanding these perspectives is important in a full analysis of communicative behaviour. One's gender may indeed reinforce thinking patterns and forms of behaviour and individuals may, in turn, encourage and help maintain certain patterns of linguistic behaviour.

Many aspects of behaviour, linguistic or otherwise, between individuals in organisations, may be reaffirmed in a number of subtle as well as explicit ways. In the boardroom, for example, a participant may earn the respect of his or her colleagues by appearing to empathise with them, when in actual fact his or her main aim is to garner their support. In another instance, a participant may openly criticise a colleague in order to place him or herself as the holder of expert knowledge. In other circumstances, the way men relate to and interact with their female colleagues may be directly influenced by the historical perspective of the company or the attitudes projected by the chairperson, managing director or other senior personnel towards the latter. Work politics also impacts on the issue of gender which appears a significant variable in many workplaces. However, as has been suggested by Mullins (1999), researchers in this area risk the danger of being over-sensitive to gender and could interpret any seemingly negative comment as an instance of gender discrimination. Likewise, under-

sensitivity may also occur with the result that the researcher may fail to identify genuine instances of gender bias and distortion resulting in outmoded attitudes towards women. The much cited example of how an aggressive response by a woman may be perceived as bossy and unfeminine or not in keeping with the culture of the group, but by a man, be acceptable and viewed as an expression of professional role status, is pertinent here.

A focus on gender orientations in the workplace should therefore aim to examine critically the way men and women structure and present their contributions in management meetings, the possible factors that influence their patterns of speech, and further observe the conditions under which they occur as well as the difference that gender orientations bring to the interaction.

1.7   Language and gender

The study of language and gender continues to stimulate research and debate across the social sciences, particularly in sociolinguistic studies. During the last decade, a number of important questions have been asked regarding the links between gender and discourse, with some researchers challenging the basis of gender difference research itself, questioning in particular the extent to which researchers are justified in invoking gender as an analytic category (e.g. Ochs, 1993; Wetherall, 2000). When interest in language and gender began in the 1970s, the emphasis was upon defining speech styles and attributing them to men and women. Answers to the question 'Do, and why do women and men talk differently?' (Stokoe and Smithson, 2001) were housed within three distinct theoretical frameworks: deficit (e.g. Lakoff, 1973), dominance (e.g. Fishman, 1978a, 1978b) and difference (e.g. Tannen, 1990). Within these perspectives, it was argued respectively that women's speech style is inferior to men's, that patriarchy permeates interaction, and that men and women belong to different subcultures and therefore develop different, and maybe, not equally valued communication styles.

The continued interest in the notion that there might be significant differences between women's and men's talk was potentially revolutionary. This notion had the impact of influencing the direction of research. Where before, researchers had concentrated on the language used by men or, for that matter, tended to treat men's talk as the standard against which women's language styles would be measured, a gradual shift in the assessment of

language use saw the inclusion of women as subjects of research alongside men. West, Lazar and Kramarae (2000:128) explain how 'often this involved inventories of differences between women and men across isolated linguistic variables such as pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar.' This way, they explain, women's speech behaviours were compared to men's to see what, if anything, distinguished the two. The results of the researches conducted then, were, as outlined by West, Lazar and Kramarae (2000) that women generally displayed more variability in pitch and intonation than did men. It was also found that women used standard or prestige pronunciation more than men did. More recently, interest in the field of language and gender has gravitated towards studying men's and women's speech behaviours in varied settings. An increasing number of scholars are moving away from the mere compilation of inventories and are directing their efforts to understanding why differences appear and inspecting more carefully the conditions under which they occur. This has seen researchers such as Holmes (1990) and West (1995) take a more functional approach in their analysis of speech patterns as they seek to find answers to why the observed differences appear.

Another offshoot from the initial 'sex difference' approach to research and one that has attracted much interest and controversy is the notion of the interdependence of speech-style and power. The fundamental assumption of this approach is that men and women are brought up in different subcultures with the result that they are acculturated into talking as men or as women, a phenomenon which Tannen (1990:192) describes as 'a matter of individual perceptions of rights and obligations, as they grow out of individual habits and expectations.' This perspective on sex differences and speech styles may imply that the fundamental differences that may emerge in the speech of men and women arise from 'what they know how to do' or, as a result of either 'what they are like or what they have learned' (West, 1995).

Much of the current research into language and gender is therefore underpinned by an essentialist treatment of sex and gender that views gender as a fixed 'trait' or characteristic which is part of an individual. The notion that there are differences between the sexes is hardly a matter of dispute. Sex is biologically determined whereas gender is a social construct involving the whole gamut of psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females (Wardhaugh, 1998). The differences may be accentuated by shared beliefs about how women and men should sound when they talk, and any differences in their verbal repertoire may be explained further by fine gradations of social class and upbringing (Labov,

1975), level of education, breadth of exposure, position held, age, personality, and so on. Linguistic varieties are also correlated to the type of profession (Schegloff, 1987b). These are but some of the more obvious factors that affect individual variation in speech. This view of language can lead to the categorisation of women and men into homogenous groups resulting in the development of generalised theories about their communication styles which have persisted over time.

The essentialist framework and resultant emphasis on the differences between the two gender styles can also lead to biased findings of studies of language and gender, leading to a culture of exaggeration in sex difference research. This bias has led to some researchers rejecting the assumption that gender-linked communication styles exist and instead locating the differences in the interactions, which are dynamic and socially constituted phenomena (Butler, 1990; Wodak, 1997). A shift in position, in the field of language and gender, has also led to an emphasis on the social construction of gender and gendered identities (e.g. Bucholtz, Liang, and Sutton, 1999; Hall and Bucholtz, 1995). According to this position, the focus is upon the performative nature of gender, its status as an 'emergent property' of social interaction, and how people 'do' gender as a routine accomplishment in talk (Butler, 1990; West and Zimmerman, 1991). It is widely acknowledged that varieties of language are the result of different social attitudes towards the behaviour of women and men, and the attitudes women and men themselves consequently have to language as a social symbol. Society actually lays down different social roles for them and expects different behaviour patterns from them. Wardhaugh (1998:314-5) cites many examples of this.

If then, women and men speak a particular kind of language considered to be appropriate to their sex, various social pressures and expectations subject to the situation and context, further reinforce the idea of appropriateness of expression or language. Society lays down different social roles for them and expects different behaviour patterns from them. 'Language simply reflects this social fact' (Trudgill, 1976:88. Because women, as claimed, are more status conscious than men (Trudgill, 1976), they tend to use forms that are considered to be better or more correct than those used by men. For this reason, claims Trudgill (1987), they are more sensitive to the significance of social class-related linguistic variables. Masculinity, he further claims, seems to favour working-class speech, which is often associated with toughness. There is often pressure on men to use less prestigious non-standard varieties as a sign of masculinity and personal identity. The pressure on women is different. West, Lazar and

Kramarae (2000:129) argue that 'women attempt to gain status through their speech patterns because society holds them to a more exacting standard of behaviour than men while denying them opportunities to gain status through alternative means'. For Bernstein (1972) a particular kind of social structure leads to a particular kind of linguistic behaviour and this behaviour in turn reproduces the original social structure.

Much of the literature on language and gender has so far tended to focus on women's supposed deficits as speakers (Lakoff, 1975), and more recently, West and Zimmerman (1985) and Tannen (1990) have advanced views on women's and men's different conversation 'styles', leading to women, among other things, being explained as operating below the level of competence displayed by their male counterparts. Such assessments imply that there is some standard of conversation competence, on the basis of which women's conversation practices can be evaluated. Questions might then be asked as to what indeed that standard is, how it has affected judgements of women's conversation abilities, and, by implication, judgments of women themselves.

Many of the findings cited earlier (see 1.5) and above were, it may be argued, mere platitudes grounded in research findings drawn from limited data and therefore lacking solid evidentiary support. The newer studies (many conducted in UK, New Zealand and Japan) indicate that, in carefully matched samples of women's and men's speech, females tend to value relational closeness and avoid relationship threatening types of criticism, with the result that their style is viewed as indirect, elaborate and affective, whereas most men's language is described as being relatively more direct, succinct and instrumental (Mulac, Wiemann, Widermann and Gibson, 2001). Tannen (1990) also states that mitigation in female talk expresses female concerns for affiliation, reciprocity and solidarity with others while men prefer a clear display of power. More recently, studies of men and women's speech styles conducted in other non-western countries such as Japan and China have also shown that women and men have different ways of speaking that are gender related but which must nonetheless be treated as equally valid.

Findings such as these have stimulated a wide range of studies by scholars in different countries (Clark, 1996; Luethge and Byosiere, 2007; Al-Lamsky, 2007) qualifying, criticising, refuting and refining their arguments and often generating new ones. Holmes (1990:202), for example, drawing on a great deal of empirical research, contends that the

picture of women's speech styles which now emerges is 'far more encouraging than one which regards them as anxiety-ridden participants in interaction, afraid to assert their views …', while Goodwin (1990), Cameron (1992), and Tannen (1990) believe that the main reason women and men speak differently is because of socialisation processes which lead to stylistic differences and these, in turn, lead to misattributions about speakers' intentions and personalities. They further point out that male speakers are socialised into a competitive style of discourse, whereas women are socialised into a more cooperative style of speaking, which can be misconstrued and misunderstood.

My research will seek to analyse how men and women manage conversation and present themselves to best advantage in senior management meetings. It should also give a description of the dynamics of the workplace and show how the complexity of perception has a direct bearing on the nature, impact and interpretation of interpersonal communication in encounters where value is attached to talk and impression management is key.

It should be noted that all the interactants in this study are second language speakers of English. Comparing their use of language with that of first language speakers is beyond the scope of this study but it should be borne in mind that the education system in Zimbabwe is modelled along the British system; the medium of instruction tends to be English throughout, and persons operating at this corporate level are fluent in English.

1.8   Conclusion and some general observations

The chapter has given the background to the research by presenting a discussion of the topics considered central to the study. To this end, the chapter gave an outline of the area of investigation, the reasons for the expressed interest, and the relevance of the study. I then stated the aims of the research and outlined the research questions which the study seeks to find answers to. The chapter then gave a brief overview of the historical and current analysis of the Zimbabwean business world which serves as background and situational context to the study. This was followed by a brief discussion of selected literature on and about some of the more pertinent issues related to the area of study: namely; talk and gender in public settings, gender dynamics at the workplace and language and gender.

The chapter also discussed the significance of gender categories in society which make it almost impossible for people to move through their lives in a non-gendered way, and impossible not to behave in a way that brings out gendered behaviour in others. At the same time, the maintenance of gender categories depends largely on how people conduct themselves day-to-day. The categories of male and female could not persist as structurally important social categories, if society did not continue to perform gendered and gendering behaviour. In other words, the gender order and social categories of male and female on which it rests, come out of social practice. Social practice, a term used to refer to human activity when emphasising the conventional order, derives from social structure. While structure constrains practice, it does not determine it. The two, structure and practice, are in a dialectical relationship subject to a dynamic and changing social order which will in turn shape gender practices. This study in essence, seeks to trace the place of language and social practice at the workplace. Hitherto, research conducted in western contexts has been based largely on white middle-class males and females in England, America and Australia. The findings from these researches, have been used to inform the current study which sets out to partially fill the 'research gap' by working outside the usual profile of studies.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. *Chapter 1* lays the background information to the research and focuses mainly on related literature in the area of study. In this chapter, areas related to the topic under investigation are explored and discussed. I begin by defining briefly the field of investigation then justify the relevance and importance of the research. This is followed by the statement of aims after which a brief overview of the historical and current analysis of the business scenario in Zimbabwe is provided as situational context. The chapter then explores some of the more pertinent issues around studies in language and gender as discussed in the literature cited.

Chapter 2 consists of a survey of the workplace. This chapter attempts to direct attention to the reality of power and its dynamics in the work environment. The chapter focuses on those factors that have a bearing on how men and women interact in a situated encounter. Verbal interaction is usually analysed macro-sociologically: it cannot solely be a result of what people say within the immediate situation in which it occurs. The chapter sets to demonstrate that what people say and how they say it in specific interactions expresses and reflects historical and social structural forces beyond the boundaries of the immediate encounters.

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical approaches that will be employed in analysing the data. It provides an initial characterisation of the selected analytical tools and describes their assumptive base and analytical properties. The chapter also focuses on the assumption underlying the theories constituting the approaches and their interrelatedness. It is on these theories that the analytical interpretation of the data in chapter five is based.

Chapter 4 is an analytical description of the broad data collection procedures and selected methodology for the research. It describes and justifies the sampling techniques used and lays out the analytical and interpretive framework adopted for the research. The chapter argues in support of the approaches used in this study which should yield rich data without the limitations of the more rigid methodological structures often used. An important component of Chapter 4 is a worked out demonstration of how the analysis and interpretation of data will be conducted in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 analyses the data collected for this study. The chapter sets to offer a critical perspective combined with systematic linguistic analysis drawn from data that should provide answers to the core question which this study seeks to find answers to, namely: how women and men use various interactional mechanisms in senior management meetings as they seek to position their ideas to best advantage. The chapter also analyses the way men and women manage conversation and present themselves as they play out roles. The chapter includes a summative discussion and an appeal to 'local logic' through commentary based on focus group discussions (FGDs), in an attempt to explain the differences in the language behaviours of men and women in order to explain power relevant discourse structures in senior management meetings in Zimbabwe.

Chapter Six serves as a summary of and conclusion to the research. It highlights some concerns underlying the field of study. In this chapter, I also stake a claim of the contributions that this research has made to the field of interactional sociolinguistics. I make suggestions on how my findings can be applied in the fields of applied linguistics, English for specific purposes, management and communication studies and on the job training amongst others. I conclude by suggesting possible areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2:

BACKGROUND: THE WORKPLACE AS CONTEXT

2.0   Introduction

This chapter provides an ecological background to the workplace landscape, which serves as context to the field of study. The chapter looks at aspects of the workplace and examines the factors that have a significant bearing on the practices and relationships that influence and affect interactional processes in contexts such as the boardroom. It also examines the broad parameters of interaction as they apply in the workplace.

The description and analysis of work-related settings, in addition, provides a backdrop to the dynamics of the workplace with all its interpretive complexity. A clearer appreciation of the workplace must include, among other things, an understanding of the shared habitual practices of the institution. Successful analysis of workplace interaction also requires considerable understanding of the context within which it takes place. Workplace context has, according to Bell (1984), at least two aspects: extra-institutional (which calls for the recognition of the fact that each workplace is situated in a wider societal context that might have a bearing on what is taking place in the actual workplace), and intra-institutional (which calls for the understanding of the distinctive nature of the workplace). Close inspection and understanding of the dynamics of the workplace as both context and frame in which the interaction takes place should consequently yield rich data that can be examined, weighed and categorised as corroborating background to the study. The workplace as context should also bring about an important methodological point of conversation inference, which can be used as much by the analyst as by the participant. Knowledge of and a clear understanding of the variables that have a significant bearing on the nature of interaction that takes place at the worksite are therefore important.

The selected workplace related topics that are outlined below have a bearing on how people at work interact in a situated encounter. The abridged topics are sequenced in a particular order for clearer exposition and here numbered for ease of reference. In the chapter, I begin by looking at the dynamics of the workplace (2.1) and how people working in institutions orient

themselves to institutional settings. In these settings, there exist two distinct types of discourses: <u>the institutional and the professional (2.2)</u> which must be managed as part of ongoing <u>communication at the workplace</u> (2.3) as interactants in situated encounters seek to legitimate and distribute their expert knowledge and information through talk. The focus of the study is on the <u>'front stage'(2.4)</u>, what in most institutions is represented by the boardroom where professionals meet to discuss and analyse issues central to the management of business. The discussions that take place in the boardroom are situated in the <u>wider context of institutional practices (2.5)</u>, histories and socially structured forces that exist beyond the boundaries of the immediate encounters. These create contextual cues that participants in discussion use to guess at speaker meaning. Of significance is the point that talk at the workplace is firmly situated in, and reflects <u>the organisation's culture</u> (2.6). The efficiency of <u>a group (2.7) within an organisation</u> depends largely on how well the efforts of its individual members are coordinated through various <u>interpersonal communication (2.8)</u> strategies to form a group effort and consensus. An important factor that comes out of the relational contexts of a communicative event is the <u>notion of power (2.9)</u> and how this is distributed, as <u>access to discourse</u> (2.10) can be an important social resource upon which power and dominance is based, giving the more powerful speaker privileged access to influence processes and outcomes. In all this, <u>perception (2.11)</u> of self and the 'other' has a significant bearing on how well one performs in interaction, in this instance, at the workplace.

2.1   The dynamics of the workplace

Workplace discourse has evoked much interest in recent years as researchers seek to understand the dynamics of the various workplace contexts and more specifically how professions are constituted, identities played out and relations of power fashioned out of talk at work. The most extensive and theoretically coherent studies of workplace discourse tend to fall within the framework of conversation analysis and are well represented in Schegloff (1987a), Billig (1987) and Boden (1994). Originally developed to account for the orderliness of everyday talk, such a framework has been extended to account for talk in institutional settings by Atkinson and Drew (1979), Drew and Heritage (1992) and Boden and Zimmerman (1991). In these studies, interactional asymmetry is a dominant theme. Atkinson and Drew (1979), for example, in their study of courtroom interaction, focus on how asymmetry is accomplished through patterned question and answer sequences and how accusations are

made and refuted by the offer of excuses and justifications. Researchers in the field of conversation analysis assert that the fine-grained analysis of speaker turns and utterances sheds light on such general notions as institutional practice and identity and accounts for the ways in which participants orient themselves to institutional settings. Thus Sarangi and Roberts (1999) see medical doctors, for example, as taking on their doctoring identity when they represent themselves as questioners of patients and view the prosecutor as deliberately designing his turns in quick succession to each other and not giving the defendant a chance to speak, as a way to implicate the defendant or discredit the witness.

Similarly in the boardroom, as suggested in the interviewees' comments in the preliminary work for this study, interactants position their contributions in such a way as to persuade others to see things from their perspective, and in this way influence outcome. Institutional rules and procedures, therefore, partly derive their legitimacy through participants' recognition and willingness to abide by a set of institutional routines and discourses that are, in turn, peculiar to the institution itself. The social facts of workplace life such as the passing of resolutions, decision making, standard setting or what counts as 'success' are therefore not a given or simply the product of external variables but are interactionally accomplished through talk. Several interactional sociolinguistic studies (e.g. Fisher and Todd, 1983; Silverman, 1987; Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Sarangi and Roberts, 1999) dealing with institutional settings, appeal, in addition, to a range of external variables such as class, gender and status in order to fully explain observable interaction patterns. The link between broader social analysis, ethnography and critical discourse analysis and the structuring of power relations in talk is well illustrated in Heller's (1994:7) work where the interaction observed is related both to what goes on within work sites and the wider issues of social mobility. In my study, a clear understanding of what goes on in the workplace should help with the analysis and interpretation of the interactions studied.

2.2   Institutional and professional discourses at the workplace

Within the workplace itself, interactional communication can be split into institutional and professional discourse. Institutional discourse refers to the discourse closely linked with the characteristic language style and features of the institution, while professional discourse refers

mainly to the language that professionals use in given contexts within the workplace. The distinction outlined here is not new. There is a long tradition in discourse-based sociolinguistic and professional communication studies, which focuses on micro-level interaction and tries to distinguish between institutional and professional discourse. Most of these studies have been in health care (e.g. Fisher and Todd, 1983; Labov and Fanshel, 1997), legal (e.g. Atkinson and Drew, 1979), and educational settings (e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975).

Most of the studies referred to above have been primarily concerned with the structure of interpersonal interaction rather than the nature of interaction at institutional level. Early discourse analytical studies (e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) focused on micro-level speech act strategies and issues of coherence in the classroom. In their search for patterns of linguistic behaviour, they came up with a generic linguistic pattern (initiation-response-feedback) as characteristic of classroom, as well as other discourse environments. These early studies of face-to-face encounters were mainly concerned with the study of the language of interaction and not so much the institutional setting, which was, in this case, only viewed as a significant variable to explain stylistic differences in speech. Sarangi and Roberts (1999) bridge the gap and define institutional discourse as comprising those interactional features which are attributed to institutional practice either obviously or covertly and which are authoritatively backed up by a set of rules and regulations governing the institution. Thus the language of the institution which in turn feeds into the language of interaction in more specific contexts is made up of clearly recognisable discourses that function in such a way as to make specific courses of action institution-specific. For example, in management meetings (which are a relatively new site in discourse studies), many of the discourse engagements are held at an inter-professional level, with blurred hierarchies which often call for, and result in a demonstration of professional authority and credibility partly manifested during and through interaction by means of the specific discourse (Drew and Heritage, 1992) of the institution..

Debate over the distinction between an institution and its related professions has led to further debate over the nature of institutional and professional discourse (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999; Gunnarsson, 1997). It could be suggested that what the professionals routinely say as a way of accomplishing their duties at the workplace can be called professional discourse, and that the language which is used in the performance of institutional practices, institutional discourse.

Superficially, any given profession will have identifiable linguistic features, which are not only unique and accepted, but also valid and authoritative. At one extreme, argue Sarangi and Roberts (1999:15), 'becoming a scientist or a lawyer is no more than having a mastery of the language of science or law.' They argue further that an apprentice in any given field is required to learn the discourse of his trade in order to be certified and to acquire credibility or what Lave and Wenger (1991) call 'peripheral legitimate participation.' In real terms, what then counts as professional discourse will depend on the range of discourses available within an institution. Thus an attorney in his chambers must of necessity use the language of law. In the field of business, for example, interactants learn to adopt discourses in keeping with their positions, statuses and roles, reflecting in a way, the institution's rules and professional practices. Viewed from this angle, professional authority and credibility is equated with the acquisition of a body of specialist knowledge and language, thus giving rise to a form of hybridity between expertise and performance, which the participants are called upon to manage interactionally. Expert knowledge and purpose of interaction thus become visible as professionals play out their roles and position themselves to best advantage and align their contributions in an asymmetrical discoursal relationship.

Despite such an attempt to distinguish between institutional and professional discourse, there are apparent common elements between them. According to Sarangi and Roberts (1999:16), 'the two types of discourses share ways of constructing truth out of workplace rhetoric and developing ways that create and legitimate the practices of both the profession and the institution.' Sarangi and Roberts (1999) also argue that institutional and professional discourses share similar ways for the distribution of knowledge, for instance, the discursive processes and strategies used for decision-making and problem-solving. The interchange between institutional and professional discourses permeates many other aspects of institutional life but particularly the aspect of verbal communication.

2.3   Communication at the workplace

Workplaces in essence are held together by communicative practices in their various forms, including talk (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). Much of the talk that regulates the workplace takes place in meetings. Understanding the interactional asymmetry of the workplace, which includes in the main, face-to-face encounters with colleagues in a defined context, is therefore

important. Many meetings at the workplace are held at an inter-professional level with overlapping hierarchies, resulting in complex social relations, which often call for the co-interactants to construct and play out their identities and validate expertise. In meetings, this is done through how professionals self-present and the establishment of authority through competing moves and the use of various discourse strategies to further their goals. It follows therefore that manipulation of communication resources and strategies is important as they influence access to opportunities.

According to Holmes, Stubbe and Vine (1999), analysis of workplace interaction rests on two assumptions. Firstly, the wider context is crucial both for understanding the discourse and for defining who the speaker is, as the site in which an encounter takes place significantly affects how we interpret what is said and by whom it is said. Secondly, and more fundamentally, the participants in an interaction are, throughout their discourse, engaged in a dynamic process of identity construction (Butler, 1990) and extensive research has demonstrated how any particular utterance may be analysed as contributing to the construction of more than one aspect of an individual's identity, whether psychological, professional, social or gendered. Consequently, women entering male-dominated top level management meetings need to be conversant with the rhetoric of meetings. Edley and Wetherell (1997:182-3) observe that, although shared knowledge about masculinity and femininity is 'fragmented, inconsistent and contradictory,' at the moment, there can be little dispute that the major cultural knowledge we have about management meetings is that they are highly masculinised. Given that management meetings are an important site for 'doing power' and for professional identity construction means that women, as the new entrants have to be positioned for purposes of this study as the 'other,' which brings about the issue of social categorisation in meetings.

Social categorisation, which is theoretically linked to many social and cognitive processes, including self-concept, social perception stereotyping, intra- and inter-group behaviours (Turner, 1988), is enacted and constructed through everyday discursive practices. Given that social categories are 'worked up' in everyday interaction (Potter, 1996), it follows therefore that the direct involvement of women in management meetings can be viewed as a significant challenge to the routine reproduction of an important male discourse and identity. It is therefore one of the aims of this study to examine how far the discursive practices of women,

appropriate though they may be to the context, reflect or deviate from the accepted practices of the dominant social group (in this case males) in the given context. It follows therefore that management meetings can comprise a site which provides a rich source of data about enacted identities and categorisation of persons in institutions.

Analyses of talk-in-interaction in the workplace should be embedded in studies of the conversation mechanisms which help produce both the order and meaning of an interaction. Schegloff (1999) points out that analysts of workplace interaction should address themselves to resources and practices from and by which persons co-construct interaction. They should examine how interaction is produced within a matrix of turns organised into sequences, infer the motives and intentions of the speakers, determine the identities and orientations that surface from the interactions, as well as note the stances projected by men and women as they play out their roles. This seems to suggest that a concern about how men or women say what they say in and out of the boardroom is synonymous with an examination of how gender norms are recycled in talk.

2.4 Data sites at the workplace: researching the front stage and the back stage

Workplace discourse can be categorised into front stage and back stage. Goffman (1959), adopting a 'dramaturgical perspective,' suggests that social life in general can be analysed in what he refers to as 'front' and 'back' regions. He argues that 'the notion of audience becomes central to impression management across these different regions (1959:110). The front regions being 'the place where the performance is given' (1959:110), (in this study the boardroom), and the back region may be defined as 'a place relative to a given performance' (1959:114) (e.g. along corridors the club-house or golf course). Much of what goes on in the back stage gives a more complete picture of workplace interaction, even as it relates to the category of persons under study in this instance. Goffman goes on to show how the front and the back regions are constantly regulated, not just in terms of activities that happen, but also in terms of formal and informal language behaviours which are 'stage' specific. The back stage language in this metaphor-cum-model refers more to the way people talk and behave in everyday life and consists of 'reciprocal first-naming, cooperative decision-making, profanity,

open sexual remarks … informal teasing … sub-standard speech … mumbling and shouting, playful aggressiveness and 'kidding', and inconsiderateness for the other in minor but all potentially symbolic acts.' The front stage behaviour language can be taken as the absence, and in some sense, the opposite of this (Goffman, 1959:129).

What such a list suggests is that back stage behaviour is certainly more differentiated than the standard front stage encounters and as such, is more difficult to define. For Goffman, however, there is no rigid dividing line between the front and back regions, as there are bound to be leakages between the front and back regions, for instance in the use of first names in both the back and front stages. Goffman's performance metaphor would also broadly compare with the distinction made earlier between institutional and professional encounters on the one hand, and communication between and across professionals, on the other hand. Most studies within discourse analysis and workplace sociology have, it seems, focused on the interaction between the professional and the client, having assumed that problems with communication occur more in the realm of institutional discourse as in, for example, the much trodden area of doctor-patient interaction or social worker-client relationship than between professionals. Much to the contrary, communication between professionals can be as complicated as it is interesting to study, turning Cicourel's (1992) question – 'What is going on here?' i.e. between professionals and clients into a classic question which could be asked in respect of the kinds of interaction conducted in the front stage between professionals. Cicourel's question, drawn from a doctor's consulting rooms, sought to understand what goes on during consultation as the interactants seek meaning and understanding of the questions asked and utterances made by the doctor and patient in turn. In such contexts, inferencing takes on a special character as it has a significant bearing on the interpretive process.

As Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor implies, there is in the front stage, an element of the 'set piece,' a relatively bounded encounter within each interaction, which has the status of a unified whole. The boardroom may be considered as such, and consequently lends itself more to systematic study than studies in the backstage as it is less likely to be lumbered by methodological and ethical implications than are studies of the back stage. In an interactional activity of this nature involving professionals, the work of analysts becomes more interesting as they set out to analyse, moment-by-moment, how participants' professionalism, social status, expertise and personal orientations are negotiated and validated. At this workplace site,

expert knowledge is drawn on and compared against common sense knowledge and opinions. More specifically, during discussions in meetings and in the process of decision-making, knowledge is created and distributed and interest in others' views cultivated by how people position their ideas. Participant contributions are thus calculated for best effect and inferencing takes on a special character. This front stage talk, which will be the focus of this study, is goal-oriented in both professional and institutionally relevant ways.

2.5   Discourse contexts within the workplace

Discourse contexts as discussed above in 2.4, whether situated in the back stage or front stage, offer value to the understanding of the fine-grained detail of interaction in institutional contexts. Fine-grained analyses of talk in workplaces include aspects of sequential organisation (e.g. turn-taking/turn design), ways of negotiating (e.g. topic control and face management) and categorisation (e.g. role, status or professional identity). Underpinning many of these aspects is the theoretical notion of context and, allied to this, the methods used by participants to make sense of and actively construct a particular context or the defining of a situation. Of paramount importance in a study of this nature is the definition and identification of what Auer and Luzio (1992) refer to as 'true contexualisation' work which refers to the work that interactants do to make the context happen and set it within wider institutional frames in order to arrive at common understanding. As Duranti and Goodwin (1992) reaffirm, context must be approached from the view of the participants who create it.

Drawing on CA's focus on interactants' own procedures for organising talk, Gumperz (1982) aims to bridge the gap between the way identities in interactional encounters are determined by what he calls 'socio-political forces' and the way in which workplace landscapes are drawn on through ongoing interaction. Viewed this way, context is then not just the observable accomplishment of speakers, but also includes the wider context of institutional practices, histories and ideologies which create possible scenarios that the listener uses to guess at speaker meaning.

At both theoretical and practical levels, Gumperz is concerned with linguistic and cultural diversity serving as context. Theoretically, he explores how diversity has a significant bearing on the interpretive process. Practically, he has observed the ways in which linguistic and

cultural diversity can lead to misjudgements of communicative intent and ability and so contribute to misconceptions. His key notion of 'contextualisation cues' is crucial for understanding how intent is communicated. Gumperz (1982:124) describes these cues as 'any aspect of the surface utterance which, when mapped onto message content, can be shown to be functional in the signalling of interpretive frames. He further emphasises that these cues, together with lexical and grammatical features, are the means by which interactants construct local meaning jointly and connect it to wider knowledge sets and experiences to come away with an approximation of the intended meaning. As such, these lexical and grammatical features are open to misjudgements in intercultural as well as cross-gender encounters, since they can be seen as indexical and are, as such, rarely reflected on as possible sources of communicative problems where participants have different verbal repertoires. The point raised by Gumperz is particularly pertinent for this study as co-interactants in a meeting may judge the other as incompetent and/or inadequate in trying to influence outcomes, not because of lack of knowledge, skill and experience on their part, but simply because their intentions are misjudged owing to how their contributions are interpreted. It appears relevant therefore, that how one articulates and frames an idea in a meeting will determine its fate. The speaker's intention and listener's interpretation must correlate. An important point discussed here is that conversation inference is used as much by the addressor as by the addressee and is largely informed by the context in which the interaction takes place.

2.6 Organisational culture

Of key importance to the study of workplace interaction is the need for some understanding of a specific organisation's culture. Harrison (1972:125) defines culture as 'the unique lifestyle of a group of people, the coping strategies and skills developed and adapted for particular purposes.' Culture, he argues, represents a body of communicable knowledge and learned behaviour that humans acquire and pass on for *survival* (emphasis my own) and success within an environment. Among the many demands made upon any organisation therefore, is the increasing necessity to nurture an organisational culture compatible with the psychic needs of the organisation's members.

Organisational culture or climate has real effects on the way people work with and relate to one another. This culture is created by the way people interact with one another. And since it

is caused by interactants' behaviour, it can be managed. This means that managers can decide on culturally derived preferences and philosophies that are designed to establish and maintain a constructive, inclusive and positive organisational culture. Interactants can also make choices about the culture they want to relate to.

There are a number of different types of recognisable organisational cultures. Harrison (1972) and later, Mullins (1999) for instance give an overview of the four main types of organisational cultures as: power culture, role culture, task culture and person culture. Every organisation will have its own unique culture and most large businesses are likely to be something of a mix of cultures. Different people will feel more comfortable if their personalities are consistent with the culture of that part of the organisation in which they are employed. The culture of an organisation develops over time and in response to a complex set of factors. More recent entrants into an organisation might therefore take time to adjust to and adopt both the overt and covert culture and to be able to distinguish between the 'preferred' culture and the 'official' culture in use. It is this silent culture which carries, amongst other things, the norms that drive patterns of behaviour within the company. Often, these remain unnamed, undiscussed and unmentioned and lie outside managerial control. Women and men who find themselves within these new, unmarked and pervasive boundaries are therefore faced with a choice to either seek acceptance by adopting both the culture and the language of the dominant group or, by remaining true to themselves, risk remaining in the wings.

As businesses grow larger, and with more complex structures and hierarchies, the simple line of organisational authority and responsibility is now often inadequate to cope with the growing complexities of many of today's organisations. Added to this is the change in nature and character of the key players in the communication process. Haney (1986) lists among them factors like educational background, age, and gender as affecting further, individual variations among members of a group. Evolving and transforming society is beginning to impose other requirements. In the case of Zimbabwe, there has been a growing concern with gender balance, resulting from calls for genuine equality, the role of women in organisations and the empowerment of the same. In the last two decades of political independence, the post-independence economic change, transformation in attitudes to gender, and the surge of unprecedented numbers of women entering the world of business, stands to represent a sharp change in the social fabric of many organisations. Zimbabwean society, one might venture to

add, has traditionally been one with marked social inequalities between women and men, rigid gender-roles and weak sanctions against transgressors. The sharp break with traditional values is bound to impact on organisations and conceivably cause problems. Given that the structure and nature of most of today's organisations and the attitudes found within them are in many respects inimical to the gender balance and equity existing within the society, this calls for a serious reappraisal of, and where advisable, significant changes in the social fabric of most organisations.

It could be argued therefore that evolving organisations by their very nature must nurture a culture of inclusive and effective communication. The large size of most groups, their complexity, demands for greater cohesion, efficiency and higher profit margins as well as accountability, would mean that today's organisations arguably require communicative competence at an unprecedented level of excellence, where the contributions of any one member cannot be minimised.

2.7   Group behaviour

The culture of an organisation can, it has been argued, affect the individual and group behaviour of an organisation. Analysis of group behaviour as it relates to the workplace is therefore necessary in order to understand and comment on the functions of group operations and processes, which in turn influence the behaviour of individual members. There are two well recognised methods for analysing the behaviour of individuals in group situations. Mullins (1999), in his study of group behaviour in business settings identifies these as sociometry and interaction process analysis. For purposes of this study, however, the latter is more pertinent. The basic assumption behind the analysis of interaction is that behaviour in groups may be analysed from the viewpoint of its function and processes. This approach has developed largely from the ground breaking work of Bales (1950) on methods for the study of small groups which continues to influence studies of group communication (see Patton and Griffin, 1981 and Mullins, 1999). The approach aims to provide ways of describing group processes and indications of factors influencing the process.

Meetings in organisations are held among participating members who then constitute a group. Constituted groups are an essential feature in the life of organisations, where individuals in
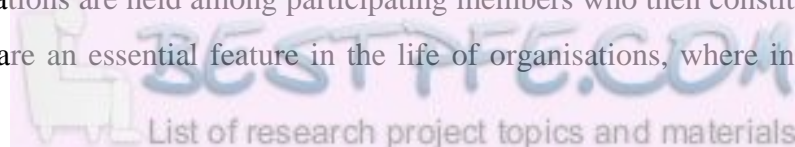
groups interact extensively with one another as they share complementary knowledge and expertise. Group-based management is used to improve communication, coordination and co-operation within the organisation and full participation by members enhances chances of acceptance and implementation of decisions arrived at. Members are therefore encouraged to elaborate or build on ideas expressed by others and to bounce ideas off one another. Full participation and interaction by members can have a snowball effect and provoke thoughts and ideas in the minds of others. One might therefore expect a higher standard of decision-making to result from group discussion in line with what Mullins (1999) refers to as the 'highest common view.' Pressures on individual members to conform to the common view means that minority ideas may be suppressed. In management meetings where women are in the minority, as is the case in most organisations in Zimbabwe, it becomes imperative that interaction among members is understood as taking place between equal interactants and that the contributions of each are equally valued despite the different language varieties that may be employed to state ideas. Such interaction can only take place in an environment in which interactants are accommodating towards the way others present and align their ideas.

Ongoing interest in the study of group processes and behaviour has led to the development of group dynamics as a field of study aimed at increasing group effectiveness through improving social interaction skills. Mullins (1999: 466-504) explains that group dynamics refers to the study of face-to-face interactions within small groups. A central feature of group dynamics is 'sensitivity,' which here can be explained as the ability to perceive accurately how others react to one. 'Heightened sensitivity' also refers to the ability to assess behavioural relationships between others and reasons for such behaviour, as well as the ability to relate one's behaviour to the requirements of the situation.

Business meetings, being a group function, can be viewed as ritualised interactional contexts where individuals in decision-making groups and who play specific roles in potentially difficult discursive situations, come together to discuss some publicly stated or agreed upon task for a specific and limited purpose and whose aim is to reach consensus. Problem-solving processes would involve different types of behaviour consistent with effective group activities. These would include a deliberate investigative approach aimed at identifying and analysing a mutual problem, evaluating possible ways of trying to resolve it and preparing to implement a selected solution. The underlying feature of the group would be a spirit of cooperation in which members would relate to each other by showing trust and spontaneity

instead of strategy and, the open expression of feelings and disagreements which would allow for behavioural flexibility. In such a critical but cooperative atmosphere, differing points of view aimed at developing new procedures and arrangements for mutual benefit are welcomed as possible sources of valuable knowledge. Both types of behaviour are essential for working out a planned task as stipulated in the agenda. Problems arise however when elements of the two paradigms are confused, a typical example being when open honest disagreement or difference of opinion on ideas is perceived as a personal affront. It appears the case that communication in groups calls for clear and positive interpersonal relations focussed on the understanding of each other as interactants in a given situational environment strive to arrive at a common view.

2.8   Communication and interpersonal relations

In studies of workplace communication, it has also been noted that the communicator in any communicative event or context is a complex being with feelings, values, attitudes, perceptions, needs and motives very much peculiar to him/herself. The efficiency of a group would therefore depend largely on how well the efforts of its individual members are coordinated, as communication occurs in a relational context, resulting in a high degree of satisfactory communication. It could be argued further that communication in a business context does not just happen; it is a well-orchestrated effort with moves and counter moves made, and points posed with specific objectives in mind. The higher one is on the organisational ladder, the more time and energy he or she is likely to devote to communication. Haney (1986) claims that many studies carried out in this area have shown that a typical administrator-cum-executive spends 75 per cent of their time communicating, and 75 per cent of that in individual face-to-face situations. Even middle to lower level management personnel devote the bulk of their working hours to the process of communication.

Four broad characteristics of relational communication have been identified from the literature read. Firstly, as a concept, relational communication can be characterised as a relationship between interlocutors who view themselves as being the sole members of a common action which causes them to interact in a certain manner. A communicative exchange between two people is generally viewed as being somewhat exclusive as the

members are bound by common interest. McCall and Simon (1978) argue that relationships between speakers may also be constrained by how well or not the people know each other. Some relationships can also be role-oriented. The relational partners behave towards each other based upon the role each of the interactants plays, as well as how they perceive each other. In meetings, these become formal relationships. McCall and Simon (1978), in describing this form of relationship in which the individuals know each other as distinctive individuals in addition to their roles claim that both relationships can provide constraints to the form of communication involved. In a formal relationship as arises at the workplace, the constraints arise from the specific obligation and expectations of the relational roles.

The second characteristic of interpersonal communication is that it is guided by knowledge of one's relational partner. Miller and Steinberg (1975) base their conceptualisation of interpersonal communication on the type of information relational partners use to make communication predictions about one another. They argue that communication predictions may be based upon cultural, sociological, and psychological information. Cultural information is garnered from the culture to which a person belongs. Sociological information stems from one's group membership, and psychological information comes from understanding the uniqueness of the individual rather than from the person's role. All three appear necessary components of successful group communication and dynamics.

The third statement characterising interpersonal communication is that it involves the transmission of various types of symbols, each lending special meaning to the verbal encounter. Drawing from the work of Coates (1988) and Fishman (1983), these can be, for example, the use of hedging and topic management, among others. The symbols can be successfully interpreted by interactants but can also constrain understanding.

The fourth characteristic of interpersonal communication is that it is functional; it serves some purpose and therefore people design their interpersonal communication to attain some goal. This is not to say that all communication is planned. There is much spontaneity, as may be expressed, for example, by an exclamation. Overall, interpersonal communication is a means for social exchange related to the acquisition of a variety of resources which are provided through communication. Communication can also be used to negotiate the condition of future exchanges or to seek redress for previous inequitable exchanges. A critical function of

communication in relational exchanges is that rather than being an end in itself, communication might also be a means to an end.

Successful group communication would therefore depend largely on how well members know each other, the roles they bring to the interaction process and how well the efforts of its individual members are coordinated, resulting in a high degree of satisfactory communication. It could be argued further that communication in a business context does not happen automatically; it is a well-orchestrated effort during which members interact with one another and points posed with specific objectives in mind.

2.9   Power politics

One significant factor that comes out of the relational context of a communicative event, and one that is important to this research, is the notion of power imbalance. A person or group cannot have power in isolation; power has to be exercised or deployed, or has the potential of being deployed in relation to some other person or group. Pienaar and Spoelstra (1991) see every interaction and every social relationship, inside and outside organisations, as involving an exercise of power. Gibson's (1991:139) definition of power as simply the ability to get things done the way you want them done seems to reflect the basic nature of interactional communication within organisations. In examining the properties of power in interpersonal communication, French and Raven (1959:150-167), Pienaar and Spoelstra (1991) and Mullins (1999:257), suggest and explain the five bases of power as legitimate, reward, coercive, expert and referent. The characteristics can be summarised as: (a) legitimate, which is derived from the ability to influence because of position; (b) reward, which is derived from the ability to reward compliance and includes verbal and non-verbal rewards; (c) coercive, which gives the power-holder the ability to take something away from the target for non-compliance with a request or behaviour; (d) expert, also referred to as information power, which refers to the holder of expertise that is highly valued and whose presentation makes a large impact on outcome; and (e) referent or personal power, which is based on the target's attraction to the power-holder owing to perceived similarity, liking, position, congeniality, and so on. Power can also be indirect, where the power-holder can use a third party to channel the power

through to the target, or associative, when, for example, an idea in a meeting is strategically introduced through a third party whose opinions are known to be respected.

A growing body of research suggests that women and men view power in significantly different ways. A number of scholars have discussed differences between women's and men's notions of power (Bloom, 1990; Tannen, 1990; Wood, 1986). Based on the results of her research in which she compared female and male managers' attitudes and behaviour at work, Bloom (1990) argues that women and men perceive and act on power differently and that because of this difference, power impacts on the structure and nature of interaction in gender specific ways. The idea that women think in relational, connected terms, and men in terms of autonomy and status, is not new to gender research and has implications relating to power. Women, it has been argued, are more concerned with solidarity and sharing of power where male talk appears to focus on dominating others (see1.5). Wood (1986) also suggests that women tend to look inward for the source of problems, while men blame external circumstances and factors. This has led some theorists (e.g. Gallagher, 1989; Langellier and Hall, 1989; Langellier and Peterson, 1984) to point to the value of treating the perspective of women and men as independently valid, rather than in comparison to each other. This is a call for an independent assessment of the language styles of men and women. The call also brings to mind a number of questions - whether, for instance, a speaker's gender has an impact on that speaker's experiences with perceptions of power. This becomes particularly relevant when the speaker is challenged by communication contexts which involve a power imbalance. Do both women and men view gender as being a relevant factor in their roles as communicators, which then impacts on every aspect of their roles and activities? Though men and women may have similar skills, are women and men as they communicate aware of any differences between and among them that may exist? Do they have different perceptions of the way they construct their roles? Do they have different conceptions of the meaning of power, its distribution, sharing and negotiation? The boardroom as a front stage data site should clearly provide a special context for research into the dynamics of personal relationships and power politics.

2.10   Discourse and access

As discussed briefly in Chapter 1, one of the social resources on which power and dominance is based, is privileged access to discourse and communication. The notion of access discussed at length by Van Dijk (1993b) is in itself a rather vague concept, but one which has relevance in organised and institutionalised discourse settings. Van Dijk argues that there is a correlation between access to discourse and social power. Effective power in the workplace is mostly cognitive, and enacted by persuasion or manipulation, among other strategic ways to change the minds of others in one's own interests. Managing conversation and the minds of others is essentially a function of talk or text. In a boardroom, the chairperson and division heads would have better access to the communicative event due to governing conditions and consequences such as their planning, decisions on presence or absence of participants, seating arrangements, inclusion and placement of items on the agenda and other important and consequential dimensions of such institutional talk. These conditions and dimensions pre-define the context of the meeting, which is one subtle way of enacting power. For Sarangi and Roberts (1999), and Van Dijk (1993b), the crucial implication of this association between access to discourse and power is that it implies the conditions of control over the minds of other people. It also works up concepts of consensus and acceptance that often result in the management of perceptions of the 'other' (though not always) that are associated with more influence, symbolic power and hegemony.

2.11   Speaker and hearer perception

In workplace contexts, perception as a concept is important when relating to and communicating with other human beings in a world of feelings, attitudes, values, aspirations, ideas and emotions. Perception, affected by the subtle teachings of one's culture, plays a critical role in how one communicates with others. In a communication context, the perception of the other is a key concept as it helps to explain the behaviour of people communicating and relating to one another in any setting. In a given communication context, most reasonably mature adults should be able to tolerate fairly well differences in value judgements, opinions, attitudes, points of view, beliefs and ideas. Failure to understand one's colleagues may mean that one is failing to accommodate the views of the 'other' and, as a

result, burdening oneself with the handicaps arising from faulty communication. Women and men can, as a result, spend their entire life in an organisation fending off the reactions of others as, inter alia, misinformed, crazy, disrespectful, presumptuous, aggressive or defensive, and in the process fail to see and appreciate the views expressed by the 'other'. These negative feelings and perceptions can serve as critical obstacles to effective interpersonal communication climates, which Gibb (1961), after an eight-year study of recordings of interpersonal discussion, gives an outline of. The two diverse communication climates can be summarised as threatening (defensive) and non-threatening (supportive). According to Gibb (1961) and Olivier and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2001:158) it would appear that if one were to offer another the most supportive climate possible, then one's behaviour should be descriptive, problem-oriented, spontaneous, empathetic and they should perceive the other as equal and open, and should avoid, in a corresponding order, attempting to evaluate, control, employ stratagems, being neutral, showing superiority and certainty. The behaviour categories outlined above are interactive and the perception that the speaker has of the 'other,' often determines that of the respondent.

Further to this, the significance of individual differences is particularly apparent when focusing on the process of perception. These differences are a characteristic feature of behaviour, which has particular importance in face-to-face interaction. People see things in different ways and they do not passively receive information from the world; they analyse and judge it. Mullins and Hicks (1999) claim that perception is at the root of all organisational behaviour and that any situation can be analysed in terms of its perceptual connotations. In the workplace, therefore, the dynamics of person perception cannot be overestimated. One individual will react to another differently and be affected by their behaviour in a particular way. The interaction of individuals thus provides an additional layer of interpretation and complexity where the perceiver is part of a process that will influence and be influenced by the other people in the given situation. The analyst is however not privy to what goes on in the minds of the interlocutors.

The study of interpersonal perception leads into a discussion of how people communicate. Communication and perception are inextricably bound to one another. How we communicate with our colleagues, boss or subordinates will depend largely on our perception of them, our

'history' with them, as well as our own emotional state and a host of other issues. A significant social implication of perception is that it often results in stereotyping of particular groups of people based on, for example, gender, age and race. In the workplace, there are many commonplace stereotypes about women employees. In the Zimbabwean situation, for example, women may be perceived as the 'mother' figure (ambuya), an 'aunt', the tea pourer at meetings, and the not-so-well informed (the butt-end of sexist jokes). In addition, women who have made it to the top have to face other pressures concerned with their visibility and uniqueness. The token and sometimes lone woman has to contend with additional interest because of her gender and she may be excluded from 'male' social activities, e.g. the ritualistic meetings on the green (golf meetings) and back stage talk, thus denying her the opportunity of getting inducted into, and acquainted with how men talk, as well as being privy to some of the ideas and issues that are introduced, discussed, and often decided on away from the official boardroom. This phenomenon was confirmed in the focus group discussions (FGDs), (discussed in 4.2.5).

Studies focussing on the behavioural characteristics of men and women (Tannen, 1990; West, 1995), have further noted that women may be caught in a 'double bind'. If they show typical feminine characteristics, it is thought that they do not have the ambition to go further; but if they demonstrate aggressiveness and determination they can be perceived as too aggressive, masculine and pushy. From the viewpoint above, it seems important, therefore, for interactants to be aware of their own prejudices and assumptions concerning each other and women in particular. Studies focussing on interpersonal communication have also highlighted the shortcomings that can arise from the process of perceptual selectivity and subjectivity, as well as of the inferences and assumptions which go beyond the information given as the perception process can also be encumbered by prejudices. This implies that the importance of communication and the way people interact with others at the workplace cannot be overemphasised, as it stands to benefit anyone in dealing with a potentially difficult or sensitive situation.

2.12   General observations

This chapter has looked at the workplace in general and examined the factors that have a significant bearing on the practices and relationships which influence and affect interactional processes and practices at the workplace. The sources discussed provided useful insights for the development of my research. It was noted that the workplace as a data site, offers a wide spectrum of activities and spheres which have an impact on what goes on. In institutions, there are clear divisions of labour, which can also be divisions of value. Across societies, the gendered division of labour involves differential power and status. Men's activities – those that are guarded closely as men's domain – involve greater societal power. Within institutions too, the omnirelevance of gender emerges not simply in institutional structure, but in the balance of activities that take place on a day-to-day basis. As women move into positions of corporate leadership, both the traditional and the new players are forced to review their concepts of workplace ideologies to meet the challenges of the new order. Perceptions, attitudes and conduct, among other critical facets of workplace life and politics previously inscribed in social life and culture, have to change. Evidently then, successful analysis of workplace interaction requires some understanding of the context within which it takes place. It is critical in research of this nature that hands-on inspection of the workplace, as both context and frame of discourse, should be examined and categorised as corroborating background to the study.

On a methodological level, the literature discussed in this chapter has sensitised me to the need to let the data speak for itself by allowing the reader to enter the workplace and to imagine, as far as possible, the dynamics of the work environment as situational background to the study. The suggested analytical tools - CA, CDA and pragmatics, used alongside a description (as provided in this chapter) of the factors that have a significant bearing on the practices and relationships that influence and affect interactional practices and processes in the workplace – should help 'comb through and tease out' the meanings in the said utterances. It is clear here that studies have largely focused on western-style business organisations. There is a glaring absence of such work involving the emerging business ideologies and cultures in Southern Africa and this study is an attempt to begin to characterise them.

CHAPTER 3:
THEORETICAL APPROACHES THAT INFORM THE RESEARCH

3.0   Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of interactional sociolinguistics, which serves as the overarching framework for this study. The chapter then reviews and explores aspects of the theoretical approaches that will be employed in analysing the data collected in board meetings from the workplaces used as data sites. It explores the selected analytical frameworks, and most importantly, examines their suitability to the study at hand. The chapter will therefore discuss key characteristics of conversation analysis, pragmatics and critical discourse analysis, and seek to justify the selection and use of the approaches in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The chapter will also examine gender-role socialisation, difference, dominance and structuralist approaches which will be used as a backdrop against which perceived differences in the linguistic behaviour of men and women in interaction will be explained.

Since the beginning of the 1940s, interest within the field of sociolinguistics has developed towards a more socially-based interactive and pragmatic understanding of human action and interaction (Gumperz, 1999). As a more recent discipline, interactional sociolinguistics attempts to shift the paradigm away from the traditional focus on speaker attributes to explain language variation and towards an alternative focus on the importance of situational context in the accomplishment of social identity. One commonality in the many approaches to the study of language in recent times is a shift away from just describing the language behaviour of speakers to explaining their broader behaviour. Van Dijk (2000:95) argues that 'the key contribution of this approach is to recast speaker identities, not as background 'givens', but as interactionally produced in those contexts which are crucial strategic sites in modern bureaucratic industrial societies'.

Drawing on both ethnography and CA, interactional sociolinguistics looks therefore at local and wider ideological assumptions that count as meaningful and appropriate content to serve
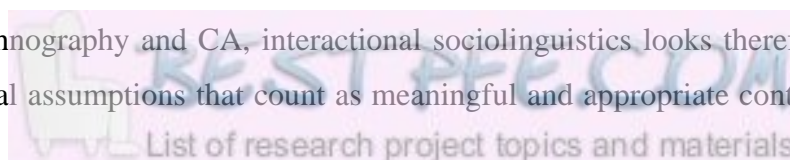
as context for a situated encounter. In doing so, interactional sociolinguistics draws on all four dimensions of context explained by Duranti and Goodwin (1992) (namely the social and physical framework, the behavioural environment, language as context and the extra situational context, see 4.3.3) so that analysis is embedded in the particular local context and supported by ethnographic evidence. Gumperz's (1982) argument that communication cannot be studied in isolation becomes central to the study. He sees the role of interactional sociolinguistics as primarily to bring about the notion of context as the basis for conversational inferencing which is a process during which 'implicit assumptions [are] chained together in successive parts of texts by supplying 'missing links' between explicit propositions which the hearer either supplies automatically or works out through a process of inferencing Fairclough, (1989a:81). The analyst then, not only looks at the observable and assumed context of speakers in action, but must draw upon the wider social context, together with institutional practices and ideologies that the listener uses to try to make sense of speaker meaning. Interactional sociolinguistics seeks therefore, to bridge the gap between the social world and interaction 'by focussing on communicative practice, as the real world site where societal forces merge' (Gumperz,1999:454).

The study of spoken discourse as a field in linguistics emerged initially in an attempt to characterise talk beyond the basic sentence level. At the outset, greater attention was given to the pragmatic aspects of language use, in response to previous emphasis on syntax and semantics (Levinson, 1983). Focus gradually shifted to the study of language in use for communication and the search for what gives discourse coherence. Many scholars became interested in the power of words and how people in society make sense of the world about them. This led further to a growing interest in the examination of the links between language and the structure of society. A little later, Schiffrin (1984) and Fairclough (1992) generated interest in linguistic interaction and emphasised that the circumstances of an utterance are an exceedingly important aid in the way the hearer understands it, with the occasion and context of the utterance itself serving as a rich resource from which implicit meaning can be derived. All these initiatives, belonging to many interrelated disciplines and resembling each other in a number of ways, generated streams of research which have, over time, shared and borrowed concepts and methods resulting in a confluence of ideas.

Within sociolinguistic studies, it has been argued that language itself is not a neutral and transparent means of representing reality. Rather, language is, as a tool for overt communication, necessarily laden with social values assumed to codify meaning. The word 'meaning' is itself an ambiguous word, open to a variety of definitions and subject to a number of factors. Meanings in a given speech community are constructed and constituted both explicitly and implicitly and are further subject to various shared interpretation conditions which can be drawn from a number of sociolinguistic theories. These theories have arisen from within linguistics and sociology to highlight the variations found in different social contexts of speaking (for example, formal and informal) and among various cultural and ethnic groups. Examples of these can be found in Labov (1972), Bernstein (1975) and Holmes et al. (1999).

For purposes of this study and in order to take adequate account of both the bounded encounter (see 2.4) and the wider context of interactions and their dynamic nature, my analysis will combine the insights and approaches of a number of different theoretical perspectives. Todd and Fisher (1988:9-10) note that it is often possible in this way 'to produce a richer and more comprehensive analysis'. To this end, the study will, as pointed out in 1.1, draw on the insights and techniques of a range of theories and approaches, but primarily on CA, pragmatics and CDA, to analyse the discourse strategies and linguistic choices and forms in the structuring of contributions in a meeting. The following sections provide overviews and rationales for these three main approaches that form the theoretical framework for my research.

3.1   Principles and characteristics of CA

In this section, I examine the main principles and characteristics of CA by discussing some of the rules that account for the many observed features of conversation. I then discuss some of the ways in which interlocutors can manage and manipulate conversation through shared conventions. This is important as conversation management emerged as one of the two macroareas typically representing participants' verbal performance in meetings. This is followed by a discussion of the role of schemata as an important concept in discourse production and comprehension in ongoing conversation. Justification of the use of CA as a research tool in gender-based research concludes the section.

CA, which is embedded in the single most important dynamic context of language use, namely conversation, or face-to-face interaction, is regarded as the critical first step in the analysis of discourse. Levinson (1983:286-94) gives an overview of this. He views CA as a branch of study which sets out to discover what order there might be in talk-in-interaction and how the same is constructed, thus offering the possibility of substantial insights into the nature of conversation. CA also depicts conversation as discourse constructed and negotiated between the participants, following pre-established 'rules' and communicative procedures. CA, as argued by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and Edelsky (1981), also provides a powerful tool for documenting how people position themselves relative to each other, in moment-to-moment conversation and for noting the instances, processes and linguistic mechanisms through which interactants negotiate meaning. This group of scholars known as ethnomethodologists, as they set out to discover what methods people use to participate in and make sense of interaction, focuses on the techniques that the members of a society or group utilise to interpret an utterance and act within their social world. They see CA as a first step towards achieving a 'naturalistic observational discipline' to deal with details of social interaction in a 'rigorous, empirical and formal way' (Coulthard, 1977:52).

Another important characteristic of CA is that it gives particular attention to the immediate details, the chronological organisation of, and the various interactional possibilities that arise in the unfolding development of interaction, as may indeed be obtained in top management meetings. Pomerantz and Fehr (2000) stress further that in very important ways, the sense or intelligibility of an action is provided for by a close examination of its immediate location in an ongoing series of actions. This refers to the local context of talk.

Yet another characteristic of CA leads to a different understanding of the concept or rules of interaction, than that held by other research traditions. Rather than depend on explanations derived from theory for human conduct, CA views rules as situationally invoked standards that, according to Pomerantz and Fehr (2000:66) are 'a part of the activity they seek to explain.' This, points out Schegloff (1999), helps analysts address themselves to linguistic resources and practices from and by which persons co-construct interaction. If therefore, he further claims, interaction is produced within a matrix of turns organised into sequences, then it is from these that speaker motives and intentions are inferred, interpretations shared, identities made relevant and the 'omnirelevance' of gender in talk made self-evident. This

seems to suggest that CA is a relevant tool for research that examines the speech patterns of men and women, and that concerns about how men or women say what they say are synonymous with an examination of how gender norms are recycled in talk.

The use of CA as an approach in the analysis and interpretation of the data should therefore, as argued by Gumperz, (1999:456), make it possible for the analyst to examine turn by turn how conversation is conducted and managed to achieve targeted outcomes and to isolate and interpret 'by what signalling devices language functions can evoke the contextual presuppositions that affect ongoing interaction and interpretation in particular talk exchanges'. CA also makes it possible to examine the social orderliness of an interaction by focusing on the methods or mechanisms that conversationalists themselves use as each takes up a turn and indicates the meaning of their utterance and how it relates to the turn before. CA therefore involves the empirical examination of the use of language in the exchange of turns in conversation to negotiate for example, role-relationships, peer solidarity, the saving of face of both speaker and hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Sacks et al, 1974 and Lakoff, 1973) and how conversation effects are achieved by carefully examining the overtly lexicalised propositional content of an utterance. These characteristics of CA enable the participants to orient to what is happening and rapidly make sense of the interaction for them to make an intelligent response.

A related approach in discourse analysis based on more structured interaction in more controlled contexts is typified by the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and is now referred to as the Birmingham School approach. Their analyses were conducted in classroom settings and the approach examines spoken discourse, seeking to interpret it 'in terms of a rank structure and showing that when it is analysed after the event, there is more order and form in it than might be at first apparent' (Cook, 1990:50).

The two discourse approaches appear incompatible in a number of ways. Cook (1990:58) gives an overview of this. In the first instance, the two are applicable to very divergent kinds of interaction. While the Birmingham school has dealt only with formal and to a point predetermined discourse, and with large structures whose meaning and unity only become fully evident after the event, the ethnomethodologists, largely represented by the work of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson have avoided examining discourse in large structures and concerned themselves with meaning at the more immediate and local level. They have also

concerned themselves with sequential positioning of turns and only with free flowing and casual conversation. Rather than take an aerial view of 'what is going on here' (Cicourel, 1992), the ethnomethodologists begin at the most local level, trying to see how participants in interaction construct and handle conversation, how they judge who can speak, and at what point. 'Rather than wait until the discourse is finished and then analyse it as a whole with the full benefit of hindsight' (Cook, 1990:52), the ethnomethodologists try piecemeal to understand how meaning is constructed and how it unfolds with each utterance, as both sender and receiver monitor and can, through their response, influence the development of what is being said. They therefore view discourse as a gradually developing process rather than a finished product, preferring to, like the participant, make sense of the discourse as it unfolds (by inference), without the benefit of transcription and what Cook (1990:52) calls '*post hoc* theorising'.

Though the two approaches appear to be at variance, for purposes of this study they can be reconciled and applied side by side. To begin with, both are based on interactional discourse. Secondly, both approaches aim at observing ongoing interaction and the reason for it. Thirdly, both approaches examine the conditions under which utterances are made. Sequential moves in conversation can be made up of a number of acts which can, in turn, be combined to form various kinds of exchanges that can be developed into more complex discourse mechanisms as interactants process meaning in context. As the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) studies have shown, participants in a discourse setting need to be able to identify what type of discourse they are involved in and predict how it will typically be structured.

The Birmingham approach, which might be applied with a degree of variation to discourses in different settings in general, is particularly suited to the analysis of boardroom meetings at corporate level, as both the classroom and boardroom have certain features in common. Both are formal and ritualistic sites of interactive engagement and feature one leading participant (the teacher and the chairperson respectively) with the institutionalised power to direct the discourse. The topic, context and situation may well dictate the development of the discourse within the understood conventions for that discourse type (genre). The fairly narrow limits of the social conventions around which interactional discourses take place, however, allow for individual rhetoric and style. Analysis of discourse using the features of ethnomethodology focuses on the process of conversation and can proceed from the bottom-up to establish the smallest units made up from individual utterances first, before a discussion of the whole, as

the analyst summarises and comments on the more salient group features in context. On the other hand, the Sinclair and Coulthard model is more top-down, with its focus on product. A merged view of the two discourse approaches, CA (with its emphasis on the more local level of conversation and should therefore be attempted first) and the Birmingham School approach (with its focus on the larger structures of conversation), should make for fuller explanations of the data as the two approaches are complementary. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 in the discussion of the sample analysis (see 4.3.5).

The term 'conversation', as used in interactional studies, calls for clarification. Not all talk is conversational and thus Schegloff (1997) and others switch between the terms 'conversation' and 'talk-in-interaction'. The term 'conversation', according to Cook (1990:51), is used primarily to describe talk between a small number of participants which is characterised by turns that are relatively short. In this type of engagement, where talk 'is primarily for the participants and not for an outside audience, any unequal power of participants is partially suspended'. CA does not however, appear to have a more specific technical term to describe talk that is more than just ordinary conversation which may take place in more formal or structured settings. The object of interactional studies is in any case wider than 'ordinary' conversation and in this thesis; I set out to explore what Sarangi and Roberts (1999) refer to as institutional discourse in a well-defined space, which is in this instance the boardroom. The term 'talk-in-interaction' would be a more apt description of the type of interaction that takes place in the boardroom and would therefore be better suited to my data.

3. 2   CA and the management of conversation

Within turn-taking systems, there are various features that show the subtlety of the organisation of talk on which ethnomethodologists base their interpretations of the management of conversations. Sacks (1972) made the observation that the sense or intelligibility of utterances was tied to their particular sequential location in a stretch of talk. This underlines the notion that an important feature of conversation in any context is the local management of talk. To this end, CA seeks to examine how interlocutors can interact and coordinate, through mutually shared rules, methods and devices to produce and manage their own and other people's speech behaviour. Conversation management techniques which include the control of topics, regulation and reformulation of ideas and turn–taking among

other discourse strategies may be used by interlocutors to control and manipulate conversation. Hence speakers can compete for the floor and the end of one speaker's turn and the beginning of the next turn frequently latch onto each other.

Studies of conversations (Fishman, 1983; Sacks et al, 1974; Sarangi and Roberts, 1999) have set out to explain the flow and fluency of conversation in different settings and the fact that people generally manage to speak without extensive overlapping and without major gaps in the flow of talk. Fairclough (1992) explains that conversation management as a feature of asymmetrical turn-taking systems allows for the existence of both overlaps and gaps, as these can have a particular significance. Participants may have the right to interrupt when the speaker, in the opinion of the participants becomes irrelevant. Cook (1990:52) also suggests that 'overlap between turns…has particular significance: signalling annoyance, urgency, or a desire to correct what is being said'. Both the floor and turn are open to contestation. Depending on the length of a turn or relevance of utterance, another speaker may choose to enter the floor at a non-transition relevant place or during a pause through the use of various tactics such as interruption, self-selection and insertion or side sequence, among others, whose interpretation can be ambivalent, as Levinson's (1983) work on pragmatics has shown. Participants also use particular signalling devices which act as rules of engagement, which enable speakers to communicate to others when, for example, they can get into and out of conversation. Similarly, participants use signals to prepare the ground for the kind of turn they are going to take next. During conversation, speakers can also seek further clarification or cause the speaker to repair their utterance. In other instances, interactants can monitor or regulate the conversation of others as they seek to manage conversation.

By examining the sequential organisation of the stream of co-constructed interaction, as well as the strategies used for negotiating work and the generation of knowledge that is shared in workplaces, it is possible to investigate and document the process through which interactants in a given encounter lend meaning to and interpret each other's utterances, and for the interactant's motives and intentions to become observable in the data. Sarangi and Roberts (1999) argue that analyses of talk-in-interaction should in essence therefore be embedded in studies of the conversation mechanisms which form part of the rules of engagement within bounded encounters, which in turn help produce both the order and meaning of an interaction in the management of conversation.

Conversation Analysis text-analytic tools

The CA concepts that are used to analyse the data have been selected because they appear regularly in the data recorded and in many other social approaches to discourse. Below I give a brief outline of the properties of the concepts that I use for approaching the data from a CA perspective which I will use to characterise the action or actions that the interactants in the data performed as they negotiated talking rights and managed conversation.

Turn taking

Conversation analysis looks at turn taking and how conversationalists alternate in taking turns at speaking within identifiable boundaries. The verbal exchanges that take place within these boundaries are referred to as sequences. A sequence is marked by the start of a topic or action that is ratified by co-participants as they respond to it and it ends when the responding participants are no longer responding particularly to the prior topic or action and when such action is understood by participants in the engagement. Other relevant issues for discussion around turn taking include a description of how a speaker obtained a turn, at what point in the sequence, the timing at the initiation of the turn and how the turn was terminated, whether this was externally caused or whether the speaker selected the next speaker (Faiclough,1992; Fishman, 1983; Sacks et al, 1974,). These variable rights to speak, and the way they are assigned, imposed or claimed in face-to-face interaction, suggest the existence of a political dimension in everyday linguistic encounters.

Exchange structure

CA lays emphasis on the notion that speakers often form what Sacks (1987) refers to as adjacency pairs where the utterance of one speaker predetermines the response of the respondent, which can be either an appropriate or preferred or, an inappropriate or dispreferred one. One implication of this is that analysing conversation and turn structure should be made with due reference to prior turns and evident interpretations. This turn structure correlates with Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) initiation-response-feedback structure which emphasises that ongoing turn design is necessarily influenced by the preceding turn(s). The nature of the exchange system is relevant not only to turn-taking, but also to issues of rights and power as may be gleaned from the discourse.

Floor

Control of the floor is another turn taking mechanism which describes how speakers gain the floor, hold the floor across one or several turns and how they give up or pass the floor on. Edelsky (1981:383) suggests that floor and turn which refer to instances when one or more people take part (speak) in a conversation are best distinguished on the basis of what she calls 'participant sense' rather than 'technical criteria' when the speaker on the floor has what could be described as 'the official attention' of the audience. She identified two kinds of floors as: 'F1, a singly developed floor; and F2, a collaborative venture' where several people can operate on the same wavelength and speak simultaneously. Speakers can also claim the floor over a number of turns by self selecting or in answer to a series of questions directed at them so that in answering a question, a speaker stays on the floor and can, through what he or she says and the length of turn, dominate conversation or change the course of discussion.

Overlap

Sacks et al (1974) suggest that in talk-in-interaction, speaker change should take place at the end of sentences. When this does not happen, and one or more participants talks over the speech of another, then this constitutes overlap. The current speaker can exercise three options of control over the next turn. This can be done by the speaker using their prerogative and selecting the next speaker by name or descriptive phrase, for example 'the lady over there,' by asking a direct question which constrains the next utterance, while the third option is to select neither and leave the interested participants to self select. If these rules of conversation are not observed, overlap with the speech of the floor holder often occurs. Silence or pauses similarly create problems as participants may interpret this to mean the speaker wishes to share the floor or that they have come to the end of a turn. Cook (1990:52) also suggests, as noted above that overlap between turns has some particular significance, which could be interpreted as signalling annoyance, urgency or a desire to correct what is being said. Pauses can also carry a particular meaning like reflection or hesitation. The different interpretations then, call for the analyst to examine closely the context of each overlap.

Transition relevant place

The discussion of overlap ties in with the notion of the possible completion of an utterance in an instance where this is not overtly stated and must therefore be linked to the participants' understandings of when it is appropriate to start up at a place that could be considered a possible completion point of the speaker on the floor. These 'possible completion points' could be described as identifiable 'units of interaction with an end boundary marked by turn claiming responses from the auditor' (Edelsky, 1981:398), by a pause, a speaker's gaze away or the supposed completeness of a turn's content informed by structural features of the content (for example, the end of a phrase or main clause of a sentence) which the hearer may safely assume to be technically transition relevant places. For the researcher, identifying the transition relevant places is a lot more problematic than for the participants who are more directly involved in determining each other's expectations of who has the 'reserved right' to talk and at what point. For access to the floor, Coulthard (1977) suggests that speakers wishing to enter the floor often use clause connectors at the relevant place such as *but*, *however*, and, *also* which can turn a complete sentence into an incomplete one or any other subordinator such as *if* or *since* used to complete the turn of another. The analyst can consider these connectors as useful cues in deciding the significance and interpretation of the point at which an interlocutor enters the floor.

Interruption

The speaker on the floor is vulnerable to interruption at every transition relevant place (as discussed above), at the end of a sentence, following the appearance of one of several stereotyped fillers such as *but, uh* or vagueness indicated by what Bernstein (1962) labels sociocentric sequences such as *you know*, *eh...eh* or *whatever*. The length of a turn also has a causal effect on interruption. The longer the speaker stays on the floor, the more open they are to interruption as they are more likely to force other speakers into a position where they must interrupt in order to comment or respond to a point made. Speakers can reject interruptions if they choose not to yield the floor by speaking more loudly, more quickly or referring to the interruption and 'asking for permission' to complete their utterance for example *in a moment if you may when I have finished...* On the other hand, a participant who wishes to speak but is unable to find a suitable entry spot has the option of simply breaking into the stretch of talk of others. One or more speakers can opt for this route, resulting in simultaneous speech, which Edelsky (1981) claims is an acceptable mode of turn structure in some cultures and languages. In this sense, interruption is in a way similar to overlap in that two speakers share the floor at

the same time until one of them gives way to the other. The motives behind each action may however differ in that interruption tends to signal impatience on the part of the interrupter while overlap suggests a degree of urgency on the part of the second speaker.

Repair

Cook (1990:55) explains that in conversation, there often occurs a 'phenomenon known as repair in which the participants correct either their own words or those of another participant, edging towards a situation in which maximum communication is achieved'. 'Self initiated repair' occurs when a speaker acknowledges that aspects of his or her own argument or exposition that might be expected of him or her are in effect absent. 'Other initiated repair' on the other hand, normally occurs when an interlocutor explicitly draws attention to points that are absent or missing from their interlocutor's account. Atkinson (1999:87) argues that as a function of speech, 'other initiated repair' serves the purpose of ensuring that interlocutors have a thorough understanding of the conversation taking place. Repair can also be a discursive enactment of seniority where the more senior, in terms of role, status or age has 'rights' to initiate repair sequences in the form of repeated interruption of turns designed to elicit explanations, seek clarity, correction or additional information . This, he argues, is not usually the case in conversations between equals where scrutiny and repair of the other's speech is viewed as grossly intrusive and rude.

Topic control

Sacks (1972) observes that a conversation is made up of a string of at least two turns which can be built on with more closely related content to bring about coherence to a topic by predisposing the next speaker to at least begin with reference to the topic. This way, a sequence of turns is produced and participants try to talk topically and at the same wavelength. Often however, topic conflict can surface as participants seek ways to develop the topic in different ways resulting in competitive talk where speakers assert and reassert their own topic by constantly 'skip-connecting' back to their own utterance made in previous turns. Topic conflict can also be expressed through the way participants switch from one topic to another unrelated one and then back again to the original topic. This insertion is known as a side sequence which Cook (1990) says can be as a result of a request for clarification and often, the conversation picks up again after the brief diversion. An insertion sequence which is embedded inside of a topic is different from a side sequence in that an insertion sequence

occurs when a second alternation of a turn occurs within the first as a way of avoiding giving a direct answer or committing oneself in conversation.

Within topic control is another conversation feature known as a pre-sequencing, which refers to when participants prepare the ground for the kind of turn that they are going to take. Pre-sequencing can also be used for controlling topic development and for much greater topical coherence as the speaker, at the start of their turn, makes what Sacks et al (1974) refer to as 'preparation of propositional content' and this has particular relevance vis-à-vis how an idea is presented and positioned, which determines its fate (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet 2003) (see 1.1). Another characteristic of topic development is achieved through formulations of gist. Cook (1990) explains that gist serves as a further type of clarification in ongoing conversation where the speaker goes over, or summarises the intended meaning of what has been said by another. This has connotations for power, role status and processes of knowledge creation, where normally it is the more powerful who reformulate the utterances of another.

3.3 The role of schemata in CA

Apart from concerning itself with the devices and means that create formal links between utterances, CA also depends on, as a fundamental structuring principle, the importance of world and social knowledge known as schemata, which can be used in the production and reception of discourse (Fairclough and Wodak, 2000; Brown and Yule 1991 and Cook 1990). Brown and Yule, (1991) in their discussion of how people know what is going on in a text in a particular discourse type, base their argument on the importance of analogy with what participants in an interaction have experienced in the past and the predictions they can make based on the context and the composite meaning of the sentence already processed. In recent years, the role of prior knowledge in discourse production and comprehension has been significantly stimulated by interest in the field of artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence refers to how participants in conversation retrieve related data from prior knowledge, what Cook (1990:69) calls 'mental representations of typical situations from memory and employ the same in discourse processing to predict the contents of the particular situation which the discourse describes'. What is more, schemata need not be limited to 'stored catalogues' of data structures of people and things within a stereotypical situation or sequence of events, telling us what is likely to happen next. Notions drawn from memory may also predict

stereotypical roles and relationships of participants. One could surmise that within a boardroom, participants should have a shared schema for the progress and structure of the different type meetings. They should also have, over a period of time, shared and highly situated and culture-bound assumptions about each other. They should also be able to predict the possible courses of ongoing conversation; what the Birmingham School refers to as *context spaces* (when an utterance by one speaker gives rise to almost fixed and predictable possibilities, either as support or counter claim). 'Catalogues of data' from the past that are stored in an individual's mind should also influence predictions about length, type and structure of turn expected, when it is possible to interrupt another speaker, how to control a topic under discussion, and the various conversation management strategies that could be used. Whether women and men have the same schemata for a given situation and context can affect the way they react and relate to the other's speech.

3.4 The importance of CA in gender-related research

CA as an approach is particularly suitable for research that looks at the nature and possible differences in the behaviours of men and women, as it allows the researcher to attempt to explain the relevancies of the parties to the interaction. Social categories and identities such as male and female should not necessarily be imposed by the analyst on materials under investigation; rather through close analysis of conversation activities, it should be possible to investigate how gender and power are reflected in the language used to manage talk. As Pomerantz and Fehr (2000:66) point out, CA 'allows a researcher with a particular interest in the relations between men and women to, if they so decide, code as part of the analysis those who are female or male.' This should further enable the analyst to study how women and men participate in practices through which structures of gender domination are produced and to observe, through the sequential structure of turns, whether or not they are conscious of what they say and do. Such coding treats gender as an omnirelevant matter for analysis, although it may or may not be obviously so for the parties to the interaction. Through CA, argues Schlegloff (1987b:182), 'it should be possible to avoid perpetuating generalisations about gender-roles which have often permeated the literature on language and gender'.

3.5   Principles and characteristics of pragmatics

In this section, I examine the principles and characteristics of pragmatics and discuss the ways in which language can be used in the transfer of meaning. I then look at how pragmatics can be used in analysing the ways in which interactants present themselves in social interaction. This is important as self-presentation emerged as one of the two macro-areas of participant verbal behaviour.

Crystal (1987:120) defines pragmatics as 'a field of study that sets out to examine the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction, how an utterance is presented, and the effects of our choice on others'. In theory we can say anything we like, but in practice we follow a large number of social rules (most of them unconsciously) that influence the way we speak. There are, for instance, norms of formality and politeness that we intuitively assimilate and that we follow when talking to people who are older, in more senior positions, subordinate to us, the opposite sex, and so on.

Pragmatics also studies how people comprehend and produce a communicative act in conversation. It distinguishes two intents or meanings in each utterance. One is the informative intent or the sentence meaning and the other, the communicative intent or speaker meaning (Leech, 1983). As a discipline, pragmatics examines the principles and practices underlying all interactive linguistic performance, including aspects of how language is used to achieve particular meaning and appropriateness (Levinson, 1983). Brown and Levinson (1987) further argue that pragmatic factors influence selection of grammatical construction and vocabulary from the resources of the language.

The term pragmatics as applied to the study of language, analyses in particular, utterances from the point of view of the user, especially the choices a speaker makes among the options available for arranging the information. These choices are neither arbitrary nor just aesthetic devices to ensure variety, but have some communicative function. The ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act is referred to as pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1997) and this ability includes one's knowledge about, for example, the social status between the speakers involved and the cultural knowledge necessary for effective communication to take place. Pragmatics also allows for an examination of the constraints the speaker may encounter

in using language in social interaction, and the effects the use of a particular form of language has on the other participants in ongoing communication.

In addition, pragmatics can be viewed as the study of aspects of meaning not covered in semantics and concerned more precisely with such mechanisms whereby a speaker can mean more than, or something quite different from what he actually says by inventively exploiting communicative conventions (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, pragmatics, as an analytic approach in linguistics, can be used to account for the linguistic features in the discourse as the means employed in describing what speakers and hearers are doing on the particular occasion of use. This broad sense of pragmatic analysis should include the implicit as well as explicit purposes, assumptions, social attitudes, and so on that are effectively communicated by the use of language. This view of language use also underscores the importance of the communicative content as well as expression of an utterance, as communication involves notions of intention.

Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest a review of some of the more traditional approaches to the 'functions of speech' which were modified and fine-tuned by Lyons (1977:50-6). Lyons lists the six basic components of the communicational event as referential, emotive, connative, metalinguistic, phatic and poetic functions. Levinson (1983) suggests that the recognition of such speech functions highlights the fact that language is used to convey more than the propositional content of what is said. At the same time, communication is said to have been achieved when those inferences and presuppositions which are intended to be conveyed, can be said to have been communicated.

The various works by Austin, Strawson, Grice and Searle, in particular, serves as milestones in the development and convergence of pragmatic theories linked to sociolinguistics, whose many variables would be relevant to language understanding (Trudgill, 1978; Gumperz, 1977). Grice (1957) clearly defines the difference between the incidental transfer of information and intended communication. He makes a clear distinction between what he calls 'natural meaning', which is clear and explicit meaning, 'devoid of human intentionality' and therefore obvious, and 'non-natural meaning', equivalent to the notion of intentional communication which Schiffrin (1984:191-2) describes as '…intended to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention'. In both instances, there must exist between sender and receiver, what Grice (1957) calls 'mutual knowledge' to

function alongside the notion of the 'cooperative principle', which assumes that interactants cooperate in conversation in the way they negotiate meaning. Grice's theory explains how there can be discrepancies between 'speaker-meaning' and 'sentence-meaning', with the consequence noted by Brown and Levinson (1987) above, that what the speaker means by an utterance is not always exhausted by the meaning of the linguistic form uttered. This distinction between sentence and utterance is of fundamental importance to semantics and pragmatics, as indeed in this study. Levinson (1983:18) sees the distinction to mean that 'a sentence is an abstract theoretical entity defined within a theory of grammar' while an utterance is 'the issuance of a sentence, a sentence analogue, or sentence fragment, in an actual context'. It is therefore not sentences, but rather utterances, that become the focus of meaning (Levinson, 1983). The discourse analyst, argue Brown and Yule (1991:26), is concerned more with 'describing what speakers and hearers are doing, and not the relationship which exists between one sentence or proposition and another'. Most pragmaticists therefore prefer to use the term 'utterance' for a unit of language used by someone in context, to do something, to communicate, and reserve 'sentence' for the grammatically complete units regarded purely in isolation from their context and their function.

Pragmatics essentially depends on context for the interpretation of meaning where, for a fuller understanding of an utterance, it must be situated in context features that are culturally, socially, psychologically and linguistically relevant to the production and interpretation of the utterance. The context features also include location, formality level, subject matter and information structure and any other predictive contextual assumptions which, as Gumperz (1977) explains, would serve as 'contextualisation cues'. This dependence of utterance on context underscores Fairclough and Wodak's (2000) argument that understanding an utterance involves a great deal more than knowing the meanings of the words uttered and the grammatical relations between them. In essence, understanding an utterance involves the making of inferences that will connect what is said to what is mutually assumed (schemata) or what has been said before. In this respect, pragmatics and CA are similar to each other and both are relevant tools in the analysis of talk. Blum-Kulka's (1997) observation therefore, that pragmatics as an analytical tool illuminates meaning beyond the surface forms of language in the study of utterance meaning, is pertinent.

Attempts have been made to set boundaries around the vast field covered under pragmatics but this has proved difficult, mainly due to the variety of topics it has to account for, as well as the fact that language use and meaning is too elastic to allow a narrow definition of the concept to cover the vast number of factors that play a role in sociolinguistic conduct (Leech, 1983). Some of the aspects of language studied in pragmatics include deixis, conversational implicature, presuppositions, speech acts and politeness each of which can provide insights into person-to-person interactions.

3.6   Pragmatics and self-presentation

In this section, I discuss the link between pragmatics and the way speakers during social interaction, try to be relevant in what they intend to say by positioning themselves relative to the person for whom the utterance is intended. Within a social constructionist framework, language in verbal interaction is viewed as 'a set of strategies for negotiating the social landscape' (Crawford, 1995:21). In other words, each person's discourse is 'constructed, and is ethnicised, gendered, or professionalised within the social setting in which they are exposed' (Weedon, 1987:21).

One obvious outcome of this is that people construct talk in a manner designed to portray a particular image of them, by making their identity, authority and power in relation to others in a given setting quite explicit. Typical ways may include explicit assertions of authority realised by very direct strategies. For example, simplistic correlations of forms like modes of talk, conversation dominance through an overt show of knowledge, supportiveness, or lack of it, may be used to construct an image of the self or to show authority. As discussed in 2.4 above, self-presentation as an integral part of the interaction process that takes place in the front stage (Goffman, 1959), where impression management is crucial, and is an important consideration in the study of workplace discourse. Goffman (1967:5) suggests that when individuals interact, they are concerned with presenting an image of themselves which is the 'positive social value a person effectively claims for himself' and which is observable in the way that the person conducts themselves and how others perceive them. The rhetoric of self-presentation as analysed by Sarangi and Roberts (1999:69) 'moves cautiously between a discourse of enterprise' and credibility and how one promotes one's expertise, profession and status. Self-presentation therefore essentially concerns itself with how knowledge and

information are distributed, and how interest and credibility in the eyes of others is cultivated by how people position their ideas through the language forms that encapsulate them and how the same are perceived. Self-presentation is therefore interactively managed moment by moment as participants interact and interlocutors negotiate and validate their professionalism, expertise and role status. In high-level meetings, participants' contributions are therefore calculated and positioned for best effect as speakers strategically present themselves in a particular light through the use of selected linguistic features in the discourse for intended effect.

Various discourse strategies may also be used in the construction and presentation of oneself as participants in a boardroom 'do power.' Participants may choose to present themselves through the use of what Pateman (1980) terms 'oppressive' or 'repressive' discourse. They may also choose to use Fairclough's (1989a, 1995) 'coercive' or 'consent' power. Holmes et al (1999:355) explain that 'oppressive discourse involves the open expression of coercive or 'top-down' power, while repressive discourse is covert and a more positive means of exercising influence options and power in which speakers minimise the overt expression of differences in status or expertise and foster solidarity in order to gain their interlocutors' willing compliance and goodwill'. Both these types of power strategies involve a degree of power play where one individual or group influences or controls the verbal behaviour or thinking of others. By contrast, Fairclough's (1989a) 'consent power' and Van Dijk's (1993a) notions of hegemony include concepts such as consultative power and empowerment (Dwyer, 1990). As Fairclough (1989a:72) notes, it is however 'those people in positions of power who decide what is correct or appropriate in an interaction and who also have the power to determine to what extent power will overtly be expressed'. Social and pragmatic factors such as relative status and social distance of interlocutors, as well as how respondents typically respond, are of particular relevance in the study of how participants present themselves in ongoing interaction. The degree to which this process is a conscious one naturally varies from speaker to speaker and in different contexts.

3.7 The role of pragmatics in the present study

In this section, I give emphasis to the view that the discourse analyst must necessarily adopt a pragmatic approach to the study of language in use by examining some of the more obvious linguistic elements used within the immediate context to make sense of the relationship between the speaker and the utterance. Below, I give a brief outline of some of the key pragmatic concepts, namely: politeness strategies, speech acts, conversational implicature, deixis, irony, presupposition, and metalinguistic features, which can be used by interlocutors as they apply the 'cooperative principle' (Grice, 1975), which assumes that interactants cooperate in conversation by contributing to the ongoing speech event. I conclude the section by discussing the importance of pragmatics in gender related research.

I propose to adopt Brown and Yule's (1991:26) equation that 'doing discourse analysis [….] primarily consists of doing pragmatics', as this allows the analyst to examine critically within the immediate context what the people using language are doing. This means that during an interaction in the workplace, the one speaker may be characterised as relatively more or less powerful or knowledgeable than the addressee, depending on how they present themselves and what linguistic features they use as the means employed in what they are doing.

Below I give a brief outline of the properties of the concepts that I use for approaching the data using pragmatics, which I will use to characterise the utterances of the interactants in the data and assess how they present themselves in ongoing talk. The concepts of pragmatics that are used to analyse the data appear in many other text based approaches to discourse.

Politeness strategies

It is important to note that the construction and confirmation of professional identities and roles in meetings is done as interactants claim and offer each other positive social value co-constructively and dialogically. In such a site, threats to face, which refers to an individual's self esteem and need to be appreciated are inevitable and the management of face relations otherwise referred to as facework becomes an intricate part of personal and professional identity. Fairclough (1989a) makes an important observation that politeness is based upon factors such as recognition of differences of power and degrees of social distance. When a member speaks, their face is appreciated in the light of the role and position they hold. Who

they are is brought to bear on the form and nature of their interaction with others, as people attend to, take account of, and are involved in each other, resulting in interactions being saturated with face-work strategies. Brown and Levinson (1978) argue that speech is the most important way in which people present a personal image of themselves which others use to evaluate them, both through what they say and how they say it.

The politeness strategies used in self-presentation may take the form of explicit statements referring to roles and responsibilities, for example the use of the affected form *Madam chair, with all due respect*. Personal image can also be managed through other prosodic and linguistic markers of, for instance, deference, which can be through the use of exaggerated forms of respect such as the one cited above and other forms of politeness strategies in the form of hedges and detensifiers, hesitation, mitigation or in less obvious ways, where interactants collude in mutual face maintenance. The three characteristics of politeness strategies, namely 'formality', 'hesitancy' and expressions of 'equality' expressed by Lakoff (1977:88) and further developed by Leech (1983:169) also apply. Dedaic (2004:51) gives an outline of the rules elaborated by Leech into maxims as follows:

  a. <u>Tact Maxim</u>: Minimise cost to other. Maximise benefit to other
  b. <u>Generosity maxim</u>: Minimise benefit to self. Maximise cost to self
  c. <u>Approbation Maxim</u>: Minimise dispraise of other. Maximise praise of other
  d. <u>Modesty Maxim</u>: minimise praise of self. Maximise dispraise of self
  e. <u>Agreement Maxim</u>: Minimise disagreement between self and other. Maximise agreement between self and other
  f. <u>Sympathy Maxim</u>: Minimise antipathy between self and other. Maximise sympathy between self and other

What is important about the maxims is, as noted by Leech (1983), the point that they relate more to the hearer than to the speaker. By attending to such pragmatic detail, it becomes possible therefore to link face management with role differentiation, power and identity construction in talk.

Also, during interaction, participants' relative status and social positioning are often enacted through marked utterances. Depending on the status of the participants, certain social behaviours are expected. Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness, derived from

Goffman's (1967, 1971) becomes relevant to the analysis. Their notion of 'apparent politeness' and in particular its implications on the concepts of negative face (the individual's need for space and self-determination) is consistent with what Holmes et al. (1999:354) term avoidance-based negative politeness, which is a verbal strategy often used to soften the force of a proposition or to make concessions to those being addressed. The strategies she outlines include use of down-toner modal markers such as *perhaps, probably, possibly*; epistemic modal verbs such as *might, may*; *could* and pragmatic particles such as *I think, sort of, kind of*; all of which carry the expression of tentativeness among their possible meanings. Positive face on the other hand, which is the individual's need for appreciation and friendship in verbal interaction, is manifested in, for example, expressions of endearment, approval, alignment and agreement. Levinson's politeness theory is founded on the notion of 'intentional strategic behaviour of an individual which is meant to satisfy self and other face wants in case of threat, enacted via positive and negative styles of redress' (Blum-Kulka, 1997:50).

Brown and Levinson (1987) identify five context based strategies to describe the means through which interactants take care of their own and other people's positive and negative face needs. These are: bald on-record strategies; positive politeness strategies; negative politeness strategies; off the record strategies and opting out (for summaries of these, see Blum-Kulka, 1997:51-52). It is worth noting however that, as argued by Rudwick and Shange (2006), the analytical tools of western politeness models, such as the one developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), and cited extensively in many studies, may not adequately account for some of the linguistic customs and behavioural patterns that may emerge from my data.

Speech acts

Speech plays many different roles on different occasions and as an instance of human behaviour, it is used to fulfil a variety of functions, for example, to obtain information or to express emotions. One particular approach to the functional classification of speech is that based on speech act theory (Austin 1962). Speech act theory deals with communicative intent in that it is concerned with providing a systematic and functional classification of the intentions of speakers as they use utterances to, for example, make requests, suggestions or give new information. Sometimes in the case of the so-called explicit performatives, 'speech used to perform an action is itself the action which it reports' (Hudson, 1985:110), implying that by issuing an utterance, a speaker not only says something but also performs an action.

For example in the utterance *I now declare you man and wife*, the man and woman are joined in matrimony.

An important distinction in defining speech acts was introduced by Austin. Austin defined speech acts as the actions performed in saying something. Cutting (2002:16) explains that Austin drew a distinction between what he called the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act of an utterance. He explains that the act of saying something is known as the locutionary act. The second level is what speakers are doing with their words. This is the illocutionary force, 'what is done in uttering the words', the function of the words, the specific purpose that the speakers have in mind, such as *inviting, advising, promising, ordering, excusing* and *apologising.* The last level of speech act is the result of the words. This is known as the perlocutionary effect, 'what is done by uttering the words; is the effect on the hearer, the hearer's reaction.' The distinction between the three levels reflects the general tendency to categorise utterances made in social interaction in different ways. At the first level, utterances are taken at face value. At the second level, according to the intentions of the speaker and at the third level, according to the effects that the utterances have on the hearer, with situational and cultural context playing an important function in the interpretation of the same.

Speech act theory also includes the notion of indirect speech acts, which refers to the way a speaker may choose to express his or her communicative intent indirectly. The interpretation of these indirect speech acts can to some extent be explained in terms of the Gricean maxims of cooperation**.** These refer to: (a) the maxim of *quality,* whereby one does not say what one believes to be false or that which cannot be substantiated; (b) the maxim of *quantity*, whereby conversational contributions need to be adequately informative, with speakers giving neither more or less information than is required; (c) the maxim of *manner*, whereby speakers are required to avoid ambiguity and to be brief and orderly; and finally, (d) the maxim of *relevance* of speech, whereby speakers are required to make their contributions relevant (see Grice 1975:45 for a fuller account). The maxims are all based on the assumption of cooperative and efficient communication upon which interlocutors judge each other's contributions and make sense of what is said and what is actually meant, subject of course to the context in which the utterance was made. Grice calls this feature of conversation, conversational implicature, which interlocutors use to arrive at speaker meaning. Thus a speaker can intend to imply something conversationally 'when what he says blatantly violates

one of the maxims, but the hearer assumes that the cooperative principle is being observed' (Blum-Kulka 1997:40). As Blum-Kulka argues, one of the strengths of Grice's view of conversational implicature is that it leaves the analyst with room to explain cases of possible or potential misunderstanding which may arise when it is not clear whether the speaker intended the implicature. The application of the Gricean maxims is subject to context, where context includes the situation, as well as the wider sociocultural context (Van Dijk 2000) needed for the interpretation of indirect pragmatic meaning.

Speech act theory enabled me to gain some insight into the ways in which participants in actual conversation negotiate implicit meaning. It is important however at this point, to take note of Brown and Yule's (1991:233) concerns regarding the application of speech act theory in the analysis of conversational discourse. They argue that, because of the way speech acts are classified into 'discrete act-types such as request, promise, warn etc, this may lead to an inappropriate view of what speakers do with utterances'. A speaker may, in utterances spanning several turns, believe that he or she is performing a single act such as a request. On the other hand, a single utterance may perform several acts at once. They conclude their argument by stating that 'Speech Act theory does not offer the discourse analyst a way of determining *how* a particular set of linguistic elements, uttered in a particular conversational context, comes to receive a particular interpreted meaning'. Rather, the speech act theory enables the discourse analyst to examine utterances that may appear otherwise unrelated and to understand what is going on in a conversation, its coherence and its purpose, by linking what is said with the general knowledge about the world (schemata) which then underpins the analysts' interpretation of discourse.

Deictic context

Deictic expressions assist in giving information about the speaker, the addressee the time of speaking or the place described or referred to in discourse (Hudson, 1985). In the study of conversation, speakers may be observed presenting themselves in different roles so that the analyst's role is to distinguish between these roles, what Hudson (1985) describes as the deictic role of an individual in specific contexts which enables him to shift between the use of the first, second and third person pronouns and his social role or status. Lyons (1981) suggests that at any one point during conversation in a particular context, a speaker may assume a number of roles depending on the context or the role by which he or she is known by the participants. In other instances, a choice of subsequent pronouns, for example *I, we, he* may

simply reflect the speaker's concern for the identity that he or she wishes to assume at that particular instance of conversation and the listener must refer to local content and in other instances, schemata in order to determine the identity of the assumed speaker beyond simple substitution. Sarangi and Roberts (1999) also suggest that the use of deixis is an important mechanism in creating particular alignments and identities in interaction. Similarly, speakers may choose to use deixis as a face work strategy as they choose to mask their feelings and 'speaker-based egocentricity' (Lyons, 1981) by shifting between taking full responsibility for the utterance made, which is often reflected by the use of the first person singular pronoun *I* and shared responsibility, which can be reflected by the use of *we*. Lyons (1981:230) stresses further that deixis is relevant to the determination of the propositional meaning of utterances and can in this sense take on the function of an indexical in the sense that the truth value of the propositions that they express is directly related to time and place of utterance. In the analysis, most utterance inscriptions will serve to index the truth value of the propositions that they express in the dimensions of the deictic context.

Irony

Irony, which is defined partly in terms of use of language in 'saying one thing and meaning another' (Fairclough 1992:123), is a literary device used to create a gap between what a speaker says and what is generally understood by the audience and can therefore be used to strike a sharp discordance between the real and the ideal as perceived by the hearer. The notion of irony can be extended in its description, to include instances where the real function of an utterance is meant to express some sort of negative attitude towards the utterance of another out of anger or sarcasm. Fairclough (1992:123) explains that successful execution of irony 'depends upon interpreters being able to recognise that the meaning of an echoed text is not the text producer's meaning…and recognition may be based upon various factors such as…a blatant mismatch between apparent meaning and situational context'. In analysing text, the analyst must sift through the many layers of meaning to determine what exactly the speaker's intention was and what the utterance meant.

Presupposition

The notion of presupposition required in the analysis of conversation is pragmatic presupposition, that is, 'defined in terms of assumptions that the speaker makes about what the hearer is likely to accept without challenge' (Givon, 1979:50). This is based on the notion that successful interaction depends to a large extent on the perception held by the speaker, of

assumed common ground for the participants in the conversation. The information that is taken for granted as common ground between the participants in an interaction is collectively subsumed under the notion of presupposition. Brown and Yule (1991) argue that this means that both speaker and hearer behave in a way that assumes that their presuppositions, including what knowledge they have about each other are to be accepted. The information that the speaker gives assumes that the information encoded in the presupposition is related to the given text through prior texts within the listener's experience (Fairclough, 1989b). Sunderland (2002) argues that the reason we recognise a particular discourse is because it calls to mind another text in which the linguistic traces of this discourse exist. The information that the speaker gives is therefore not considered as entirely new or controversial and the speaker in uttering this information, gives it as if there were no alternative interpretation and meaning and does not expect contradiction. Presuppositions can therefore be manipulative and are difficult to challenge as they are based on assumptions. The task of the analyst is to determine to what extent interlocutors are speaking on the same wavelength and what presuppositions they bring to the interaction.

Mitigation

Mitigation in discourse refers to the expressive caution that is normally exercised by speakers through the use of neutral utterances in relation to contentious issues. Mitigation can be realised in a variety of ways including the use of metalingual markers originally explained by Fraser (1980, 1996) as the expressions used by speakers to moderate their speech in contexts that involve multiple interactants and may demand that the speaker pay close attention to the face needs of the listener and their reaction. Dedaic (2004: 45-46) argues that 'modality–construed metalingual adverbials, such as *Let me tell you, I'd like to talk about* or*, If I may say so* […] are metalingual mitigation markers […] that bracket discourse units and have an overtly pragmatic function whose chief roles are threefold.' She outlines these as operating on the interactional level, where the speaker informs the hearers of their violation of turn taking rules, for example, *If I may just complete my argument before you start yours*; on the pragmatic level, where the metalingual adverbials help to avoid face threats for example, *let me put you in the picture and you will be able to see for yourself*; on the ideological level, where intentions of the speaker are 'masked' by these initial turn markers for example, *If you allow me to, I will show you what I mean*. Dedaic (2004) argues further that the concepts of metalingual mitigation markers, modality and hedges seemingly overlap in that all three pragmatic concepts refer broadly to the speaker's attitude towards the veracity of the

proposition and their commitment to it as well as the speaker's affinity and alignment to both the proposition and the other interactants (Lyons, 1981; Eckert and McConell-Ginet, 2003; Dedaic, 2004).

The metalingual markers cited above can be used to investigate the different modes of human interaction and different interactive strategies associated with different genders, roles, statuses and persons from different cultural backgrounds.

Modality

Closely linked to mitigation markers is the notion of modality. Modality refers to the tone of statements '…as regards their degree of certitude and authority [and can be used to convey information] in a highly factual, […] conditional, hypothetical or subjunctive tone' (Huckin, 2007:8). Modality is carried mainly by words and phrases such as *may, might, could, will, must, it seems to me, without a doubt, its possible that, maybe, maybe or probably*. McGregor (2007:6) states that 'moods of heavy handed authority (don't challenge me) or deference can be created simply by choice of verb or modal phrase, which assert or deny the possibility, contingency or necessity of something.' By paying close attention to how modals are used in discourse, the analyst can better determine the intention of the speaker and be able to observe the reaction of the audience.

Pragmatics as an approach is particularly suited to research that looks at the nature and possible differences in the verbal behaviours of men and women in contexts such as in meetings, as it provides insights into person to person interactions. Choice of different linguistic means for a communicative act often differs from person to person. Thus, in as much as there has been a growing interest in how people in different languages observe certain pragmatic principles, cross gender studies should yield interesting findings as the analyst seeks to discover whether men and women use language to comprehend and utter a communicative act in different ways. The analyst may study the degree of commitment to proposition and social dominance from the linguistic choices made. This may reveal a degree of social and cultural variability that can then be construed as further evidence for the claim by Hymes (1974) that speech communities, which I use here to refer to men and women in meetings, can develop culturally distinct 'interactional styles.' In pragmatic terms, men are more likely to use bald on-record strategies while women tend towards using indirect ones.

Linguistic differences in pragmatic systems would therefore have important implications for studies in language and gender.

3.8 Principles and characteristics of CDA

In this section, I examine the principles and characteristics of CDA and discuss the various ways in which it can be used to analyse texts. I begin by tracing the development of current interest in CDA. I then examine the current concerns of CDA which will provide context for the research. This is followed by a discussion of the main characteristics of CDA. I then give a definition of social cognition which, as a mental activity, influences discourse, communication, and other forms of mental processes, which in turn leads to a discussion of the development of social relations of power in contemporary societies. This is followed by an outline of the main features and properties of CDA which I use in the analysis of the data.

CDA draws on social and philosophical theory to make sense of talk as well as written text. Fairclough (1993:135) describes critical discourse analysis as:

> Analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) wide social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

According to the definition above, the goal of CDA is to move beyond a surface-level examination of discourse and to probe the intricate relationship between power and inequality in society and the interactional processes through which this is realised. Like other approaches to discourse analysis, CDA analyses real instances of social interaction that take a linguistic form and notes the participatory practices of interactants and the circumstances under which these are conducted. Fairclough and Wodak (2000) and Gumperz (1982) suggest that analysis of talk must be embedded in a broader social, historical or political context of the situation and context in which it occurs. Authentic texts are produced and heard in some real-world context and CDA is thus highly context-sensitive, taking into account the most relevant textual and contextual factors that contribute to the production and interpretation of a given text. It is, in another sense, a highly integrated form of discourse analysis in that it tries to

unite at least three levels of analysis '…the text; the discursive practices and processes (in this case hearing) that create and interpret that text; and the larger social context that bears upon it' (Huckin, 2007:1).

This critical approach to discourse analysis, according to Fairclough and Wodak (2000:258), is distinctive in its view of the relationship between language and society and, more importantly, the relationship between analysis and the practices analysed. CDA therefore views discourse as a form of social practice and seeks to examine an utterance in the social structure that frames it. To this end, CDA analyses naturalistic data reflecting various discursive practices in given contexts to try and achieve an understanding of the relationship between language and power and language and a variety of identities including gender. CDA practitioners often feel compelled to take an ethical stance, one that draws attention to power imbalances, social inequities and non-democratic practices (van Dijk, 1993a, Huckin, 2007). They therefore not only describe the injustices but can be explicitly critical of them.

Fairclough (1989b) in addition characterises discourse as being socially constitutive in that it helps shape situations, social identities of, and relationships between individuals as well as groups of people. This view further assumes that people's notions of reality are constructed largely through interaction with others, with the consequence that the dominant forces in society can construct and legitimate versions of reality that serve to maintain certain ideologies which favour the interests of those same forces. It is again constitutive in the sense that discourse can 'help to sustain and reproduce the social status quo' (Fairclough and Wodak, 2000:258), as well as contribute to transforming it. CDA then, can be used to study the subtle linguistic moves that discursively construct others and which can position their way of talking as different.

Since discourse in general has many facets and is socially influential, it requires an approach which Van Dijk (1993b) terms 'true multidisciplinarity', which permits an account of intricate relationships between talk text and social cognition, giving rise to a number of important ideological variables, including identity, gender, power and culture. CDA therefore aims to make more visible these 'opaque aspects of discourse' through a critical analysis of discourse structure and context and to understand the fundamental causes, conditions and social consequences of issues of a social nature such as gender. The issue of context allows special scope for interpretation of meaning where, for a fuller understanding of an utterance, it must

be situated in features that are culturally, socially, politically, psychologically and linguistically relevant to the production and interpretation of the same (Van Dijk, 1977). The features include factors such as role and status, location, formality level, medium, subject matter and information structure and any other predictive contextual assumptions which, as Gumperz (1977) explains, would serve as 'contextualisation cues'.

The current interest in CDA as an approach to the study of language in contemporary society draws upon an upsurge of critical interest in language in society, giving rise to interest in different discourses such as those of negotiation, advertising, political speeches and meetings, to mention a few. This critical consciousness about language practices in everyday use is a response to what has been seen as an important shift in the function of language in social life in more recent times. Language, it is argued, 'has become more salient and more important in a range of social processes' (Fairclough and Wodak, 2000:259). Ways of using language, it can be argued, have become inextricably bound up with influence, power (Wodak, 1989) and success in the many facets of life. Examples of the role and impact of the calculated design of language as an instrument of power in areas such as the media, economics and politics are replete the world over. This has led to an increased interest and the development of different genres of language for specific purposes. This heightened awareness of the importance of language in social life has led in turn, to a greater level of conscious intervention to control and shape language in accordance with, for instance, economic, political or institutional objectives. Giddens (1991) contends that contemporary life is highly reflexive, as people seek to analyse and constantly change their situations and circumstances and that people can, as a result, radically alter their lives through ongoing construction and reconstruction of the self.

It follows, in part, that a critical awareness of discursive practices and other social representations of the social mind, and an orientation to transforming such practices, is a strong element contributing to the growing consciousness of the language practices of people in the various contexts and movements that came out of twentieth century social and political thought. Fairclough and Wodak (2000:262) explain that all language use is ideological and that 'any text is necessarily shaped by socially available repertoires of genres', giving rise to the notion that any political ideology fosters a genre of language used to express that ideology. CDA therefore, challenges the analyst to move from seeing language as an autonomous system, to viewing utterances as having meanings that are based on a particular

historical, social and political condition. Even more significant is the view that words are used to convey a broad sense of meaning and the meanings that are conveyed by the words uttered are again derived from the immediate social, political and historical conditions so that, as McGregor (2007:2) argues, all words have an underlying meaning and are 'politicised' by the intent of the speaker and the context. She states further that because 'Discourses are used in everyday contexts for building power and knowledge, for regulation and normalisation, for the development of new knowledge and power relations and for hegemony, […] CDA is necessary for describing, interpreting, analysing and critiquing social life […] to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias'.

Fairclough and Wodak (2000) trace the development of CDA through the works of Gramsci, Foucault, The Frankfurt School, Bakhtin (1986), and many others, to bring out aspects of discourse; how communicative contexts can be regarded as 'an arena of class struggle', and how one focus of class struggle is the meaning of words. Their approach shares a number of important interpretive insights with much of the work of critical linguists, which is in turn closely associated with Halliday's (1978; 1985) 'systemic' linguistic theory. This has, as its central feature, practical ways of analysing language believed to fulfil and represent several functions at once. These functions, according to Thompson (2006) and Fairclough (1992) are the ideational or experiential, which relates to the experience that the speaker or hearer has of the world, the interpersonal, which relates to how interactants relate with each other, and the textual, which relates to the organisation of the text. One important outcome of this, as discussed above, is that language can then be viewed as a resource for making choices, a concept fundamental to the critical analysis of spoken or written texts as it becomes possible to consider what alternatives might have been chosen in their place, giving rise to other meanings, and why the actual choices made in a given context might have been favoured. The objective of CDA seems therefore, to be to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words people use consciously or otherwise, in order to counteract and overcome the various forms of power relations that might not be transparent.

More recently, Fairclough and Van Dijk have, in their various expositions, adopted a view of CDA which seeks to bridge the divide between linguistics and socio-cultural studies. Fairclough (1992) has focused upon discursive change that is as a result of sociocultural influence. According to Fairclough (1992), the objective of analyses of tendencies in talk text is to draw CDA closer to sociocultural research, thus placing CDA as an effective method

within contemporary research studies. In this instance, Fairclough is in close agreement with Foucault's (1972) theories of discourse analysis in studies of social and cultural change, wherein the latter advocates a constitutive view of discourse. The two differ slightly in approach. While Fairclough (1992:38-40) bases his argument on text-oriented discourse analysis (hereafter referred to as TODA), Foucault (1972) adopts a more abstract approach that gives the dominant impression of people being helplessly subjected to 'immovable systems of power' and does not seek to analyse the linguistic forms that bring this oppression about. It can therefore further be argued that 'TODA is likely to reinforce the findings of social analysis by referring to concrete instances of practice and the textual forms and processes of interpretation associated with them' (Fairclough, 1992:61). Attention to particular cases cited as examples can therefore help social analysts to make substantiated claims through reference to the identified structures and conversation mechanisms which enable interactants involved in talk-in-interaction to construct discourse together and make sense of what is happening as they do so.

According to Fairclough and Wodak (2000), there are three central tenets of CDA. These are that discourse is shaped and constrained by (a) social structure (which in this study could be status, age, ethnic identity and gender); (b) culture (which in this study could be the culture of the workplace, the profession and social structure of the organisation); and (c) the words and language people use (which help to shape and constrain identities, relationships and knowledge systems and how these are transferred). Furthermore, the theoretical basis of CDA offers three perspectives from which to analyse a piece of discourse, namely discourse as text (in this case, the transcript of a portion of conversation being investigated), discourse as interaction (in this case, the social 'move' that an interactant makes as part of carrying out of one's intention with respect to others) and discourse as social context (in this case, the social and cultural context in which the utterance was made). Fairclough (1992) refers to this as the drawing together of language analysis and social theory. These three perspectives on discourse correlate with the three steps that can be used in CDA, namely description, interpretation and explanation.

Fairclough and Wodak (2000) explain that the 'description' element relates to language analysis of text and an examination of the strategies used to frame the content of the message. The 'interpretation' specifies the nature of the process of text production, 'the rules, norms and mental models of socially acceptable behaviour in specific roles or relationships used to

produce, receive and interpret the message' (McGregor, 2007:3). The 'explanation' dimension attends to issues of concern in social analysis and how the social context of the discursive event shapes the nature of the interaction by the way that each context sanctions what is permissible. Expressed differently, a critical approach to discourse seeks to 'read' a text as a description of something that is happening in a broader social context and whose interpretation depends on that society's rules, norms and mental models of socially acceptable behaviour, to reveal power relations and ideology. Fairclough (2001) and McGregor (2007) however caution that there can never be a 'right' interpretation of discourse as people have different backgrounds, social and world knowledge and context models, giving rise to the notion that where these have been attempted, they can only be viewed as adequate or plausible but not definite.

Thus the task of CDA as an analytical resource is to demystify the connections between linguistic representation, ideology and power. As Lazar (1993) puts it, the practical goal of CDA is largely educational. It hopes to raise consciousness amongst language users, and to encourage them to be self-reflective, critical and cognisant of the reality of a given situation. One of the core characteristics of CDA therefore is that it specifically sets out to explain 'power relevant' discourse structures through an examination of the social and cognitive process of their production. To this end, a critical and contextual analysis of talk text is imperative.

The aspects of CDA discussed above, which cover the relevance and importance of language use in the contemporary world, and the current concern of CDA with gender and power, dominance, social inequality and injustice, make the approach particularly appealing for research that focuses on language as it is used in society. In my analysis of the text, I shall apply the three stages of critical discourse analysis (description, interpretation and explanation) outlined by Fairclough. The three stages are interdependent but they do not necessarily have to be employed in the order in which they appear, as long as the interrelatedness becomes apparent in the discussion of the text.

Description

At the descriptive level, McGregor (2007:4), recommends that the analyst first approach a text 'in an uncritical manner, like an ordinary undiscerning reader, and then come at it again

in a critical manner', thereby submitting to the power of the text and its deeper meaning. The second reading is done with a critical eye, which involves visiting the text at different levels with a more critical mind. Placing the text in its genre (discourse type) would serve as the point of entry to the analysis. The CDA analyst should begin by observing how the text conforms to it. This genre-orientation, explains Huckin (2007), often allows the analyst to see why speakers make certain kinds of statements and how these might serve the purposes of the text producer. The analyst should then look at how the text has been presented and ask questions about how the utterances could have been constructed differently, as choices can symbolise political alignments. The analyst should also determine what exactly is being said, whose voice is being used and how the message is framed.

Interpretation

The next step would be to tackle the text down to the level of fine-grained linguistic analysis. The interpretation stage requires one to interpret the meaning of the features of text in terms of the discourse in which the text is embedded. Hymes (1977) suggests that the interpretation of particular components of speech conveyed verbally and non-verbally will vary from community to community. This seems to support Fairclough's (1989a:140) argument that texts relate to larger social structures since the 'relationship between text and social structures is an indirect mediated one'. Moreover, as Coulthard (1977) explains, there is an underlying constraint on all conversationalists to 'be relevant' and for this reason a speaker will assume, at least initially, that there is a proposition known to both which connects the speaker's question or statement to its interpretation and response by the addressee. This assumption helps to emphasise the crucial importance of shared rules and knowledge in conversation: '…not simply shared rules for the interpretation of linguistic items, but shared knowledge of the world, to which a speaker can allude or appeal' for interpretation (Coulthard, 1977:65). This knowledge of the world refers to the various situational contexts which could range from features of the physical, political or ideological context as well as the commonsense assumption upon which interpretation and understanding of the text are based.

In essence, the connection between the language used and its interpretation is realised through pragmatics, which refers to the meanings ascribed to the text by the participants in terms of their choice of intended meaning. It is also realised through the interpretive frames based in terms of participants' knowledge of the world. This gives rise to the notion of 'meaning

potential', which is activated in the process of interaction as the listener seeks to 'hear' and interpret correctly speaker meaning from the possible choices containing a range of possible meanings that may exist in the language frame of the listener (Halliday 1985).

Interpretation is also dependent on other texts within the same historical contexts so that in interacting with others, one is in dialogue with other antecedent texts, giving rise to the suggestion that 'any text is a link in a chain of texts, reacting to, drawing on, and transforming other texts' (Fairclough, 2001:223). The coherence of a text is therefore not dependent simply on the connections made in the text itself. It is generated through the process of interaction as common sense assumptions and prior knowledge are activated to enable the interpreter to make sense of a text. Interpretation of a text is consequently heavily dependent on the intertextual context or the pre-existing discourses to which the current one is related and on which the participants rely in interpreting each other's utterance (Fairclough, 1989a, 1992).

An additional factor that influences interpretation from the analysts' point of view is the ability to gather other bits of information that are not evident in the text, since meaning does not reside in language alone. Van Dijk (2002) argues that a comprehensive analysis of talk-in-interaction would consider a variety of visual, para-verbal and behavioural codes which would aid the analyst in interpreting some of the utterances made. This would entail the researcher making use of the comments about participant behaviour noted in the processes of data gathering which would be used to assist in the interpretation of the description. This ethnographic approach would also make use of the descriptions from the individual and group interviews and consultations to construct a sensible and insightful reading out of data through an appeal to 'local logic'. The participant observer method which draws upon analysts' understanding of the workplace to look at, for instance, rituals of meetings, how colleagues relate to one another before and after meetings, seating arrangements and group composition would also be suitable in research of this nature.

It is important to note however that interpretive frameworks may differ depending on a number of variables such as the age of the interlocutors, their cultural backgrounds, the roles and power they hold in the organisation and their previous experiences and expectations. It is therefore possible that the more powerful participants may impose their interpretations of discourse on other participants. Similarly, the analyst may approach a text from his or her own ideological position, different from that of the participants in the interaction process

under study. There is therefore the possibility of multiple textual interpretations of any text at the two levels, namely the interlocutor level and the analyst level, and so, as Van Dijk (2002) argues, there can never be a full analysis of talk or written text.

Explanation

The explanation stage seeks to place the text in its larger social context to explain the role of language in the perpetuation or contestation of existing social structures (Fairclough, 1992). Since the main focus of CDA is to examine critically the relationship between discourse and society, the explanation stage can be used to show how discourse can reflect various social processes and struggles between different groups of people interacting in institutions. Fairclough (1989a;163) argues that 'social structures shape members' resources (hereafter MR), which in turn shape discourses; and discourses sustain or change MR, which in turn sustain or change structures.' This has implications in terms of the MR on which people draw as they produce and interpret discourse. The contestation or reproduction of the MR in discourse implies that the producer and the interpreter must each have a particular understanding of each other's MR.

Fairclough (1989a:163) discusses further how explanation can be perceived as having two dimensions, depending on 'whether the emphasis is upon process or structure, upon processes of struggle or upon relations of power.' The explanation of a text would therefore necessarily involve a discussion of the role that discourse plays in the process of social struggle and upon relations of power. In this context, social struggle refers generally to how participants in an interaction can play out power through the way they position themselves relative to each other. Since CDA is used to focus upon the dialectical relationship between discourse and society, Fairclough (1989a) argues that the explanation stage can also be used to portray how discourse is the product of various social processes, particularly struggles for power, that can exist overtly or covertly at the three levels of social organisation, namely the societal level, the institutional level and the situational level. It follows therefore that any discourse is shaped by institutional and societal power relations and contributes in turn to institutional and societal struggles depending on the situation under which the discourse is produced and whether 'participants can easily and harmoniously interpret it as an instance of a familiar situation type - if what is going on, who's involved and the relations between those involved, are clear and according to type' (Fairclough, 1989a:165). Problems of explanation however

arise when the interpretative procedures are not clear, requiring participants to draw upon the resources which the context of the utterance provides in creative ways for them to understand the meaning of the utterance.

Fairclough (1989a:166) argues further that since one of the main aims of CDA is to look at discourse as social practice, exploration of the determinants and effects of discourse at the institutional and societal levels in particular can in a sense involve a detailed sociological analysis of talk text. He advises that if a researcher is embarking on a detailed research project, then 'a great deal of sociological analysis might be necessary.' Looking into the sociological aspects of the institution and the society involves making assumptions about culture, social relationships and social identities and how these are brought to bear on the process of interpretation. In order to 'understand' and explain what is going on in the process of production and interpretation, the analyst must 'engage in the discourse processes she is investigating'. The critical analyst can thus draw upon social theory to arrive at a rational understanding of what is going on during talk. To this end, I, like Coates (1984), Goodwin (1990) and Tannen (1990), was compelled to refer to a number of subculture theories to try and find explanations for the noted differences in the way men and women of similar role status present themselves in management meetings

Below, I discuss the four main subculture theories that the discourse analyst can refer to as he or she tries to make sense of, and find explanation for, the verbal performance of individuals or homogenous groups of people as they relate to one another in talk-in interaction. It is my argument that when people are engaged in discourse, especially in public fora, they are engaged in an important political activity in which existing power relations dictate the way in which social reality is renegotiated amongst the interactants.

Within the domain of interactional sociolinguistics, subculture theorists like Jones (1980) have attempted to explain interactional communication, power and influence strategies used by both male and female in various contexts and situations, using a variety of sub-theories, notably the structuralist, the dominance, the difference and the gender-role socialisation theory. They argue, though variously, that who one is affects the type of power and influence options from which one selects and performs linguistic influence options. The most prominent of the explanatory theories is that of gender-role socialisation articulated by a number of authorities (Jones, 1980; Taylor and Hall, 1982; Wells, 1980; Whitley 1983). The gender-role

socialisation theory, as explained by Jones (1980), refers to the process whereby men and women learn over time what appropriate role behaviours to perform in various social and organisational contexts are. For example, in the Zimbabwean culture, boys and girls are socialised differently, with boys and men being encouraged to be assertive and outspoken, while girls and women are encouraged to display nurturing and relationship-oriented behaviour (Gaidzanwa, 1992). The gender-role perspective also holds that men and women will use different kinds of strategies, irrespective of their levels of position power, perceived power or educational level. Another justification for using the gender-role perspective as an important framework for explaining the various influence strategies used by men and women in the workplace, is that researchers have discovered that needs for expression and demonstration of power vary significantly between men and women. Proponents of gender-role socialisation suggest that men and women are acculturated into different strategies for using power. As an example, Gaidzanwa (1985) argues that women are relegated to using indirect, personal and helpless strategies to influence others, while men are socialised to employ direct and concrete strategies. These strategy options, which in this study are the language features and interaction processes displayed, tend to show up women as using weaker and less effective language compared to the options used by men. Researchers in the field of interpersonal communication such as Gumperz (1977, 1999) have widely supported the claims advanced by the gender-role perspective, arguing that men and women display different clusters of power related behaviours. Coates (1984) in particular attributes much of the difference to the socialisation experiences of men and women. Researchers studying the organisational context have also generally reinforced the gender-role socialisation perspective.

The gender-role socialisation theory is in a way a refinement of the difference theory. This theory emphasises the notion that women and men belong to different subcultures where they are socialised in different sociolinguistic subcultures, and that the differences in women's and men's linguistic behaviour are interpreted as reflecting these different subcultures. Maltz and Borker (1982) in support of the gender-role socialisation theory, argue that these differences arise merely because women and men come from different 'sociolinguistic subcultures', have learnt different rules of interaction and interpret the use of certain conversation features differently. Gender differences are, however, more commonly interpreted in terms of differences in power between women and men. It is probably significant that the difference approach emerged later than the dominance approach, which subscribes to the view that the

values attached to patriarchy override all other considerations over language use and that differences between women's and men's speech arise because of male dominance over women and persist in order to keep women subordinated to men. This, according to Gumperz (1982), is due to a growing political awareness among linguists to rather investigate gender differences in communicative competence, and in particular women's language, from a positive standpoint. Sunderland (2002:129) further argues that dominance and difference approaches in language and gender studies are unproductive, as they tend to under explore gender similarities and acknowledge that gender is often constructed through language. Holmes (1990) supports this view as sociolinguists move away from claims of use of certain language features as reflecting a power imbalance between the sexes, to viewing them as merely cultural differences. Rather, men and women have internalised different norms for conversational interaction.

West and Zimmerman (1991) also subscribe to the gender role socialisation theory and see gender and power as 'inextricably linked' to women's position in the general scheme of things, and they argue that it helps constitute women's subordinate status. West (1984) further suggests that gender may function as a super ordinate status, taking primacy over other indicators of power such as professional status. The dominance approach in Lakoff's (1975) view interprets linguistic difference in women's communicative competence as a reflection of men's dominance and women's subordination and that this subordination is achieved in part, at least, through the behaviour of the women themselves. This approach will be used primarily to trace and show how dominance is achieved during talk.

The fourth theory, known as the structuralist theory, propounded by Kanter (1977), and others, contends that organisations formally and informally disadvantage women managers by limiting their opportunities within organisations. They have concluded that power and influence differentials between male and female managers emerge more from organisational structure and practice than from the performance of the individual. They argue that in workplaces, hierarchical rather than equal relationships are the norm and that it is status, rather than gender, that determines the value attached to an utterance. They have argued further that organisational practices and perceived power drive an individual's selection of influence strategies more than gender. The structuralist model becomes necessary as a tool for explanation when a woman has higher status than a man, yet on linguistic measures, fails to

dominate her male subordinate. In this case, Coates (1984) argues, the analyst has to infer a gender hierarchy where male is construed as being of higher value.

3.9   CDA and social cognition

According to Van Dijk, (1993b), discourse, communication and other forms of action and interaction are monitored by social cognition. Van Dijk (1993b:257) discusses how 'socially shared representations of social arrangements, groups and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation and arguing, thinking, […] inferencing, among others', together define social cognition. A speaker perceives, interprets and represents a communicative situation in a mental context model, including also a representation of him/herself and that of the addressee. To this, general attitudes about the other will be activated and these will show in the way the interaction is conducted. The bias will also show in the status assigned the addressee through the production of discourse structures that signal such underlying prejudice, for example, overlapping another speaker's turn. These various mental strategies and representations of individual speakers, argue Fairclough and Wodak (2000) and Van Dijk (1993b), are at the very core of CDA, as it sets to unravel through detailed description, interpretation and explanation, the ways in which discourses influence socially shared knowledge, ideologies, opinions, biases and attitudes (Van Dijk,1997).

Van Dijk (1993a) in addition notes that social cognition also mediates between micro- and macro-levels of society, and between the individual and the group respectively. He argues further that, although embodied in the minds of individuals, social cognitions are social because they are shared and presupposed by group members. As Fiske and Taylor (1991) point out, the accomplishment of discourse performance involves thought and an undertone of shared beliefs. These are presupposed, indexed or expressed in many ways by the various structures of language use in discourse. The discourse mechanisms, which are selected by the speaker and interpreted by the hearer in order to meet communicative goals, are cognitive constructs of the mind. Speakers and addressees alike use their cognitive ability to, for example, draw inferences, figure out presuppositions, decipher intentions, and infer meaning. Members in a culture or community, argues Van Dijk (1996), acquire and share discursive resources or devices and discourse studies depend in part on such typical mental notions for their interpretation, meaning, commonsense knowledge, norms or ideologies. Social cognition

therefore monitors social action and interaction and underlies the social and cultural organisation of society as a whole (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999; Resnick, Levine and Teasley, 1991).

If it has been argued that discourses move in time through repeated instances of use and in various contexts (Wodak, 1997), it stands to reason then, that members of a society may learn to use and interpret specific discourse forms as representing specific meaning and social representation. At the same time, Fairclough (1995) points out that the analysis of discursive structures must in turn be embedded in broader social, political and cultural theories of the situations and contexts in which they occur. Speakers in boardrooms and analysts alike should therefore be able to draw on social cognition to monitor ongoing discourse, communication and other forms of action and interaction.

3.10 CDA and power

One of the stated characteristics of CDA is concern over pressing social and socio-political issues. Fairclough and Wodak (2000:272) stress further that CDA, as a tool for interaction analysis, is particularly suitable, as it highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power in contemporary societies. The approach therefore deals primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustices and inequality between members of a society that may result from it. In contexts where men and women who are recognised as coming from two distinct subcultures meet as equals, it therefore requires, as suggested above, a multidisciplinary examination and account of the intricate relationships between talk, social cognition, power, society and culture.

CDA is also particularly illuminating as a means of describing, analysing and interpreting instances of spoken interaction where power may be a variable. Van Dijk (1993a) emphasises that CDA is specifically useful in the study of dominance 'jointly produced' through intricate forms of social interaction, communication and discourse when the dominated can be influenced in such a way that they accept dominance, and act in the interest of the powerful out of their own free will. This type of domination is called hegemony. Fairclough (1992) explains how ways of talking can therefore help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between, for instance, social classes, women and men and ethnic/cultural majorities

and minorities through the way they represent things and position people. This social, political and cultural organisation of dominance can also nurture the emergence of a group that Van Dijk (1993b) refers to as the power elites. This group of people enact, sustain, validate, or ignore social inequality and injustice. Owing to their positions, the elites therefore have special access to discourse, because of their 'symbolic power' and can award themselves rights to speak. Van Dijk (1993b) therefore argues that one of the key focus areas of CDA is to look at society and the interactions that take place in specific contexts with the aim of highlighting the plight of those who suffer most from inequality and dominance. CDA allows for the extensive reliance on some of its features to analyse text, by those wishing to take a telescopic view of a particular structure of text to look more closely at the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of relations in, for example, the boardroom between men and women. What is distinctive about CDA is that as a social science, 'it openly declares the emancipatory interests that motivate it' (Fairclough and Wodak, 2000:259), to intervene on behalf of the dominated and disadvantaged, applying, as it sets out to examine the inequalities and prejudices of society, 'standards of careful, rigorous and systematic analysis' (Fairclough and Wodak, 2000:259) which would in turn assist in the methodology used during textual analysis for social research (Fairclough, 2003). Yet another important and very relevant aspect of CDA is that it specifically sets out to explain 'power relevant' discourse structures through an examination of the social and cognitive process of their production. Van Dijk (1993b) however cautions that these cognitive processes underlying discourse production may not be deliberate but, as with attitudes, be largely automatised.

3.11 The role of CDA in analysing issues of language and gender

CDA as a tool for analysis is complex and multilayered. Researchers of CDA have not yet come up with a clear and standardised description of the characteristic features or tools that would enable an in-depth structure analysis of talk beyond first impressions. Van Dijk (2000:6) points out that 'different researchers may at any one time focus on the micro or the macro levels of discourse and social organisation, as well as on the interrelations between the local and the global properties of social text and talk'. Other analysts have increasingly turned their attention towards what Fairclough and Wodak (2000) and their colleagues have termed the 'discourse historical method'. This method, borrowing from Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach discussed above (3.9), is designed to enable the analysis of implicitly prejudiced

utterances, in for example, interaction between men and women as well as to identify and expose the codes and inferences contained in biased discourse as it has been used over time. The distinctive feature of this approach is its attempt to incorporate systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of written or spoken text. CDA can also be used to complement the more standard forms of social and cultural analysis often linked to particular problems and struggles of dominated groups in society. These include analyses of instances of power abuse, the enactment of gender relations, class struggles and cultural conflicts made manifest by the various discursive practices.

Furthermore, CDA can be used to probe abstract tendencies such as democratisation of orders of discourse. This democratisation may however only exist on the surface and societies may continue to marginalise women through the forms of language they use to, for example, refer to them. Fairclough (1992:207) uses the notorious example of the title 'Ms' which was 'originally designed to show gender symmetry on titles, sharing with 'Mr', the property of leaving marital status open'. Choosing the title 'Ms', which in essence should be considered a neutral title for women, can however, be considered a political statement which might be problematic in certain circles depending too on who uses the title and in what context. Only explicit discourse analysis can unravel the many layers of meaning in the many struggles that underlie gender-related discursive practices. CDA therefore seeks to analyse in detail, not only the textual markers used in discourse, but also to note, through their absences, the 'possible' knowledge that the speaker is bringing with him or her to the interaction and hence the scope in its methodology to analyse discourse fragments and sequences systematically (Fairclough, 1992).

3.12 A comparative analysis of CA, CDA and pragmatics

This section offers a comparative analysis of CA, pragmatics and CDA as I draw parallels between them and highlight the ways in which the analytic tools are complementary making it possible to apply them side by side. There is, as Van Dijk (1989a) points out, good CA-oriented work on talk that also addresses societal, political and critical issues. Many scholars too, doing more critical work that focuses on issues of prejudice, use conversations as data and analyse these at least partly from a CDA perspective. Similarly, CDA shares many basic

criteria and aims with CA. Van Dijk (1999:459-460), in his summative analysis of the two, outlines how both share concern for detail and sophisticated analysis of text or talk. Both have an interest in naturally occurring text or talk, acknowledge the critical relevance of context, underscore the importance of an interactional dimension of language, attend to the significance of the sequence structure in talk and text, and examine the order and organisation of expression, meaning and action at several levels of analysis. In addition, Van Dijk (1999: 460) stresses that both CA and CDA are relevant for analysing 'the social dimension of discourse, namely socially situated interactions, and more global, societal structures respectively', through an examination of their interactional and social functions occurring in text or talk.

Where the two differ, the disparities are in method, focus and emphasis. For instance, as comes out clearly in the Schegloff and Billig debate (Schegloff, 1999; Billig, 1999), while both CA and CDA accept the fundamentally contextual view of text and talk as being structured by a given situation, this contexualisation is attended to differently in the two fields of discourse analysis. Thus in CA, in principle, no contextual categorisations are assumed beforehand in order to understand or explain ongoing talk unless these are made relevant by the participants themselves. CA allows for evidence by attending to the details of what interactants actually say and do in order to bring out clearly the discursive relevance of context. In CDA, on the other hand, which has a history of challenging the tenets of existing social order, the application of contextualisation criteria is flexible. This means that text can be examined next to or away from context. As van Dijk (1999:460) points out, 'once a feature of context has been observed, postulated or otherwise identified, CDA may be used to explore whether and how such a feature affects or is affected by, such structures of text and talk.' Similarly, an utterance can be examined away from the immediate and local context, to unravel its properties that may be considered prejudicial.

Van Dijk (1989a) argues further that the same applies for the way groups, organisations, institutions and their structures act as context. With its different methodological slant, Van Dijk (1999:460) asserts that CDA may be relied upon to accommodate a discussion of the many ways in which 'power, dominance and inequality are expressed, enacted and reproduced in discourse, both in its structure and in its contents.' More importantly, CDA as an analytical tool allows analysts to make use of their social schemata to understand that: 'Being black, being a woman, being young or being the boss will most likely be evident from

the way people write or talk'. In other words they assume that discourse may reproduce 'social inequality' (Van Dijk, 1999:460).

CDA and CA also differ in varying degrees in their systems analysis, which has been discussed above and which becomes apparent in the analysis of the data in Chapter 5. Though these differences exist, it does not imply that the two fields themselves are in conflict or that they cannot be applied alongside each other. 'CDA (with its focus on analyst categories), as an analytical tool applied alongside CA (with its focus on participant categories), should enhance the insights into and evaluation of 'real' samples of ethnographically compiled talk text' (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999:33).

There are also several areas of overlap between pragmatics, CA and CDA. Both CA and pragmatics, for example, take into account such notions as the intentions of the speaker, the effects of the utterance on the listeners and the implications that follow from expressing something in a certain way. Pragmatics like CDA, draws on the local and wider context in the interpretation of meaning. Pragmatics also overlaps with interactional sociolinguistics in the study of social relationships that exist between participants and the way extra linguistic setting (context), activity and subject matter can constrain the choice of linguistic features and varieties used. In addition to the shared concern with context, the central topics of pragmatics, such as deixis, implicature, presupposition and politeness, can be drawn on in the other approaches as they help illuminate aspects of how conversational interaction develops. They can also be used to illuminate an analysis of how power is enacted in conversation. Pragmatics also makes it possible for the analyst to examine critically the linguistic features used in interaction and to interpret their use which may be dependent on where in the text they are used (CA) and the broader contextual settings as outlined by Duranti and Goodwin (1992) (see 4.3.3). And as with CDA and CA, pragmatics is also centrally concerned with the analysis of conversation from the point of view of how interactants present themselves and are viewed by others through the discourse conventions they use to convey factual or propositional information in the different social contexts. Pragmatics does not however, share the same concern for inequality between interactants as does CDA.

3. 13   Justification of the multidisciplinary theoretical framework

In this chapter, I have shown the strengths, interrelatedness and potential qualities of the interpretive framework outlined in this chapter and sought to justify my intention to use all three approaches in examining my data.

In a study of this nature, CA, pragmatics and CDA, used in combination, should provide productive explanatory frameworks. Ethnographically based studies of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction in a setting such as boardrooms of particular workplace organisations will illuminate the ways in which linguistic and cultural diversity can lead to various interpretations of communicative intent, and in some cases, misjudgements of ability, and so contribute to discrimination at both personal and institutional levels. Pragmatics and CA in particular also make it possible for the sociolinguistics researcher to view critically the order of an encounter for purposes of commenting.

In the analysis in Chapter 5, I attempt to construct a three dimensional analysis of interaction based on (CA), pragmatics and CDA, with interactional sociolinguistics working 'as the bridge builder, combining wider contextual knowledge with linguistic and conversational analysis to illuminate the interpretive process of interaction' (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999:13). The analytical tools of CA and pragmatics are used at the more local level to describe respectively, the details of talk-in-interaction and to explain the language properties selected by interactants to communicate meaning, 'while CDA provides the contextual influence […] which enables interactants to realise what meanings are subtly encoded in language … [in order to arrive at]…speaker intentions and attitudes' (Widdowson, 1998:141) which serve as background to interpretation and explanation.

The above approaches, each in their own right, enable the analyst to take account of the dynamic aspects of an interaction and to identify indexicals and cues that help to explicate the sort of inferences that interactants make. Thus characteristic features within each approach will help identify the mechanisms used by interactants to transfer a particular meaning. This can be defined as the procedure and means by which interactants assess speaker intention at any one point in the interaction (pragmatics) and on which they rely to plan and produce their

response, as any contribution or turn in an encounter both responds to what precedes it and affects what follows (CA) in a social and ideological context (CDA). In addition, participants in an interaction do not necessarily respond to literal meaning. In highly discursive settings, such as the corporate boardroom, listeners must go beyond surface meaning to fill in through inference, and as informed by background and local context, what is left unsaid intentionally or otherwise. The sequential structures in an interaction thus provide the means by which interactants can jointly construct meaning as they draw from each other's linguistic resources. The main purpose of interactional sociolinguistics therefore is to show how sequential positioning of turns at speaking (CA), positioned in both the immediate and wider interactional context (CDA), and analysed through an informed interpretation of the utterance (pragmatics), will yield a richer interpretation of the communicative event. This three-pronged approach should therefore yield interesting insights into how men and women operate in meetings and lead to a better understanding of the politics of the boardroom.

3.14   Summary

In this chapter, I have looked at the main approaches that will be used to inform research into the interdisciplinary characteristics of talk at the workplace. I have argued that CA focuses on the 'how' and the technical detail of talk, as it concentrates on how interactants take turns to negotiate meaning. In addition, CA is concerned with indexical procedures which inform participants in an encounter of the kind of talk they are involved in and what language behaviour they must adopt. CA's main emphasis is analysing how interactants can coordinate talk through mutually shared methods and mechanisms to manage ongoing conversation.

Pragmatics on the other hand is concerned primarily with intentionality and conversational inferencing. With pragmatics, sequentiality as it is realised through turn-taking is important. Pragmatics is also concerned with issues of language structure by focusing on the way members interact and the language choices speakers make in the building of speaker-addressee role relationships. Pragmatic concepts, for example, speech acts and politeness, can account for how meanings and identities are negotiated in situated encounters in the workplace.

CDA is viewed as a context-dependent tool to critique instances of discourse in for example, institutions, with a view to unmasking role relationships embedded in the workplace or in the wider social structure. It can be used as a tool for the study of real world settings in looking at and seeking solutions to the real social and institutional problems. In essence, CDA as an approach has shifted from looking at social issues from a purely theoretical perspective and merely giving a descriptive account of them into looking more closely and critically at practical issues of potential discrimination as the researcher examines talk and role relationships within the workplace.

Ethnography, as in this case, a supplementary tool for research, allows for a fine-grained linguistic analysis to provide contextualising cues derived largely from observation and commentary from co-researchers, to support or verify what was observed through the use of CA and CDA. I argue that a period of ethnographic observation and data-gathering would provide the researcher with the 'communicative ecology' (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999) of the workplace in order to establish adequately, the nature, frequency and importance of the different kinds of communication that can be observed at the workplace.

The four theories that serve as the overarching explanatory framework for the tendencies noted will therefore lend explanation to the way men and women conduct themselves in talk-in-interaction. In using the approaches above, there will be leakages between them as many of their characteristics are not confined to one particular approach (see 3.12). All approaches for example have a descriptive element. All depend on context for interpretation and explanation and the four approaches are fundamentally co-dependent.

In Chapter 5, in which I present, analyse and interpret the data gathered, I use the theoretical framework discussed above to analyse the discourse of meetings. I also draw to some extent, on the authority and analytic approach of Fairclough (1992) and in my detailed analysis of the excerpts, I use his three way division of description, interpretation and explanation against the backdrop of the same theoretical framework discussed above.

CHAPTER 4:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0   Introduction

Studies based on the workplace and other institutions belong in the domain of 'real world research' (Robson, 1997), which focuses on 'current, contemporary and topical issues'. This kind of research calls for clear justification of the methods identified, their appropriateness and their theoretical underpinning, if the results are to yield meaningful contributions to the relevant research field and participating research sites. Workplace interaction studies by their nature are a complex undertaking. Questions have been asked whether the *how* of talk should come before the *why*; at what point the *what* should be discussed; whether *talk* should be analysed first before collecting data on the wider context (Silverman, 1997); what constitutes context and how much of it should be brought in (Hak, 1995); what presuppositions are at work in particular talk exchanges (Gumperz, 1992); just what kinds of data one should collect; how much; under what circumstances; and more besides. There is also a need to be cautious about definitive statements one may be tempted to make about how a particular group speaks, because of variation in the way individuals speak (the classic concept of 'idiolect'). Furthermore, an important assumption is that people often tailor their language to fit the social occasion and particularly the expectations that others have of them in a given context. There is therefore, the overriding concern over what kinds of claims one can make, whether firm, tentative or definitive, based as they are on noted tendencies.

Because of the multidisciplinary nature of language studies, the process of researching talk within defined boundaries seems to raise a number of questions about the relationship between claims and evidence within an interpretive qualitative paradigm. How far, for instance, can the researcher come up with a sufficiently comprehensive interpretation of talk through use of the analytical approaches deriving, in this instance, from CA, pragmatics and CDA, even if their interrelatedness were exploited fully, if other insights that may emerge outside of this framework are not discussed.

Analysis and interpretation of the data can therefore be best served if the research methods are holistic, allowing for the use of hybrid forms of analysis to examine the different modes of talk (institutional and professional, discussed in 2.2) and the adoption of a collaborative approach to the research. This, according to Garfinkel (l967) and Sacks (1992:326), should allow 'common sense and analytic understanding to exist side by side,' suggesting, as Sacks does, the importance of creative thinking and minimal constraints on how an explanation or description of talk should read.

The observations made above seem to suggest that the study falls under the ambit of a qualitative and interpretive ethnographic research design which allows for extensive interpretation in the search for meaning. Qualitative enquiry has the distinct advantage that it allows the data to 'speak for itself' in the sense that the analyst and reader of the research document can, from what the interlocutors say, be able to determine 'What is going on here?' (Cicourel, 1992).

The chapter sets out to describe and justify the methodology and procedures adopted for the research. This includes use of the case study methodology and, for a thicker description of the data, use of focus group discussions and ethnographic detail, in order to get a fuller account of the research sites and the activities recorded and observed there. The chapter then justifies the sampling techniques employed, followed by a discussion of the analytical and interpretive approaches used in this research. The chapter also includes a sample demonstration and discussion of how the analyses in Chapter 5 will be conducted. This is followed by a brief discussion of how ethical issues were addressed before and during the research. The section that then follows examines critically the limitations of the study and a discussion of the validity and reliability of the research methodology concludes the chapter.

4.1   Research aims and questions

As discussed more fully in Chapter 1, the study aims to make contributions to existing knowledge about theory, methodology, description and application in the field of interactional sociolinguistics. At a theoretical-methodological level, the study aims to demonstrate how a particular approach to the examination of data, gathered through the use of a case study design, based on recordings and supported by a number of ethnographic strategies can, when

informed by CA, pragmatics and more indirectly CDA, generate an effective account of the pragmatic meaning of utterances. This should throw further light on the extent to which men and women use language in different ways. More specifically, at a descriptive level, the aim is to describe the dynamics of male-female interaction in a hitherto unresearched situation, namely management meetings in a Zimbabwean corporate setting. At an applied level, it is hoped that the findings will help to support applied linguistic goals such as the development of Language for Specific Purposes courses and to influence people to be more accommodating about, and appreciative of, differences in communication styles that may be gender-based.

The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 were drawn from the recurrent themes that emerged from transcribed and ethnographic data. These are:

i)   How do men and women manage conversation in management meetings? (More specifically, how do those in managerial positions use discourse strategies to negotiate speaking turns, control topics of discussion and monitor talk in meetings?)

ii)   How do men and women present themselves in management meetings? (More specifically how do interactants, through the way they use language, construct and manage professional identities and maintain their role status and relationships in meetings?)

The two broad questions above are considered also in the context of the relationship between language, power and gender and whether these differences also represent disadvantage for women participants.

Below, in the next three sections, I discuss and justify the research methods used in the collection of data. I then explain the sampling technique and show how I arrived at the subject population targeted for the research. The section after this describes in detail the sites from which the data was collected, which will serve as external contextual influence alongside which interpretation and explanation of findings will be based.

4.2   Research methods

Selection of a research method was influenced by the work of Holmes et al. (1999), in which they conducted research on how people construct professional identity at the workplace. The research was based on four New Zealand government workplaces during 1996 and early 1997. Their research sample was made up of groups of volunteers from each workplace. The groups were provided with tape recorders and were asked to record a range of their everyday interactions at work over a period of one to two weeks. The people recorded came from a range of ages and levels within each organisation. Most of the data was recorded in the policy units of the organisations involved, an environment where talk is integral to the core business of the workplace. The researchers deliberately chose workplaces where there was a high proportion of women and where they expected the gender balance to be roughly 'typical' for the New Zealand workplace, so that the findings would be representative and therefore more valid. Ethnographic data of various kinds was also collected via a number of channels. Holmes' work in language in the workplace and language and gender issues in New Zealand is much cited. Of particular appeal is the fact that the New Zealand workplace is in many ways similar to that in Zimbabwe. There are, as in Zimbabwe, very few women in senior management positions and the gender composition of the workplaces enabled the researcher to take explicit account of sociocultural factors in the analysis.

The choice of research design, in this instance, the case study method, was also guided by a number of other considerations. The case study approach was selected over and above all other research techniques (notwithstanding its shortfalls) because, as Robson (1997:146) says, 'it is typically a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence'. Robson further states that the case study method is particularly suited to studies of organisations and institutions, of workplaces and firms, management and organisational issues, organisational cultures, processes of change and adaptations (1997:147).

Furthermore, case study techniques are particularly illuminating as the data collected and the appropriate conceptual and theoretical framework are not strictly pre-specified, but rather emerge and become observable only after involvement in the field with the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 1990). In addition, the flexibility of the strategy does not depend on

routine procedures, offering what Robson (1997) terms a more 'opportunistic flavour' to research design, analysis and interpretation. What is more, if, as is the case in this instance, the main purpose of the research is *exploratory* (see 1.5)*,* trying to get some feeling of 'What is going on here?' (Cicourel, 1992), in a research site such as the workplace, where there is little guidance to what one should be looking for, given the nature of talk, then tight pre-structuring is not advisable. It is preferable instead to view case study design as a continuing process during the study. This characteristic makes it both possible and expedient to come to the study with certain general orienting ideas and interests, but sufficiently broad and flexible to avoid blinding one to important features of the case, or causing one to misinterpret evidence. Most importantly, case studies are appropriate in research studies such as this, using descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative methods, where emerging phenomena from the different data sites, can be compared and contrasted to come away with descriptions of how men and women use language in meetings.

The choice of methodology was also largely influenced by real world qualifications like the need for the researcher to have a deep understanding of the area of research (the readings which informed Chapter 2 partly served this purpose). In this regard, the case study method enabled me to insert myself into fairly unfamiliar contexts and get acquainted with the field of study, which Sarangi and Roberts (1999) consider a prerequisite for informed interpretation. Because my main concern was in understanding what happens in a specific context – the corporate boardroom – a case study was therefore clearly indicated.

Set against traditional research methods of experiment and survey, the case study approach, with its inherent link to exploratory studies, allows variables and research questions concerning naturally occurring entities, whether these are individual people, groups or organisations, to surface. Case studies by design and intent normally focus on current events and concerns which lend themselves largely to descriptive analyses and do not always call for quantitative analysis, which is a prerequisite in methods such as the experiment method (based on scientific methods) and survey research methods (based on instruments such as the questionnaire). Case studies also differ from the experimental and survey research methods in that they are inherently multi-method, typically involving observation, interviewing and analysis of documents and records – the normal requirements for a holistic research framework. The definition of case study design adopted here is sufficiently broad to encompass the use of ethnography, which can include the use of a number of data gathering

techniques employed before the actual recordings such as noting the traditions and culture of the research site or asking of questions and reading of documents available at the site; this data is not captured on audiotape but should yield rich or 'thick description' as context and background information. If this preliminary work, as Hak (1995) argues, is omitted, distortions will be created in the construction of the reality we seek to explore and confirm at the research sites. Any recording and analysing of talk, he asserts, must be regulated by an overarching interpretive ethnographic endeavour. In addition, the view that outcomes of research based on talk text are likely to be multi-faceted and difficult to capture adequately in terms of a single approach, influenced the decision to use a more inclusive approach to qualitative inquiry.

For purposes of data collection for this study, a qualitative, ethnographic, case study research design is therefore clearly indicated.

4.2.1   Sampling: the subject population

Appropriate sampling of the subjects of research is an important aspect of social enquiry, as it implies the making of judgements about people, places or situations on the basis of fragmentary evidence. It is what Smith (1975:105) refers to as 'the search for typicality' and a quest for external validity and generalisability of the findings of an enquiry. A good sample must therefore be representative and representativeness refers to the careful delimitation of the population to be sampled, as well as a description of what constitutes the sample.

'Population' in this description is used in a general sense and to include units and cases where the aspects under study take place. Altogether, I worked with 76 individuals: 29 women and 47 men.

In selecting a sampling technique, I was guided by the conceptual framework for this study outlined above in Chapter 1. I settled upon use of a combination of sampling techniques that would enable me to focus on the underlying object of my research. Purposive and rare element sampling techniques were therefore selected. The rationale of such an approach was that the two techniques are suited and complementary for this study. The principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgment as to typicality or interest.

Guided by the research questions, I had to select research sites which would specifically suit my aim and requirements. According to Patton (1990), this form of sampling can be used to locate information-rich sources or critical cases to include in the sample. This way, a sample was built up which enabled me to satisfy my specific needs in the enquiry. Through use of this technique, and as guided by Robson (1997), I was able to carry out initial sampling of the sites visited, and from analysis of the results, extend the sample in ways guided by the emerging findings. The rationale of such an approach is that where access to the research site is limited in terms of time and visits, prior to recording, the flexibility of purposive sampling will afford the researcher some opportunity to, as it were, learn on the job. In addition, where the initial study leans more towards *exploratory* work within the framework of case study design, the later stages, with the benefit of experience and hindsight, can then have a more *explanatory* and/or *confirmatory* focus regarding the sample.

The second sampling technique (rare element sampling), where values with low frequencies in the population are overrepresented in the sample, is very relevant to the research. The technique allows the researcher to look specifically for sites or samples in which the primary object of interest (in this case women in management meetings), rare as it might be, is found in comparatively larger numbers. Its central precept is that the sample so selected is likely to throw a particularly strong light on the phenomenon of interest, which is, in this case, women interacting with men in senior management positions where the majority of members are male.

4.2.2 Brief accounts of the data sites

This study was limited to a case study of four business companies in Zimbabwe. The rationale for working with the four companies was based on the assumption that the composition of the companies was by and large representative and reflective of the situation in most companies with a clearly recognisable organisational form, including both operational and reporting structures. The divisional heads would constitute a board in which top-level decisions related to the core business of the operation sit and debate issues affecting their companies. Although the study was primarily based on three companies in the city of Harare, and one in Bulawayo, owing to logistical considerations and issues of rights of entry, it was hoped that the outcomes

would provide significant insights into the ecology of the Zimbabwean workplace in general and the interactional dynamics of the boardroom in particular.

The companies that functioned as case studies are referred to by pseudonym at their request and for security reasons. All personal names mentioned have also been changed. Their voices were listened to and their utterances transcribed and analysed, albeit some more than others, depending on the degree of participation of the individuals.

Safari Company is a touring company whose headquarters are in Harare, Zimbabwe, with nine branches countrywide. The company employs 105 people. The offices where the recordings took place are located in Harare. The core nature of the company's business involves organising tours for tourists countrywide and in between cities. Usually twelve men and six women take part in board meetings. Meetings are relatively informal with the chair allowing a free flow of ideas. Relevant documents are circulated prior to the meeting but matters not on the agenda are welcome for discussion.

A total of eleven meetings totalling 39 hours were recorded from this data site. As will be noted in Table 1 below, I was given free access and right of entry at this research site which accounts for the relatively high number of meetings attended and hours of recording. The nature and character of the meetings will be referred to in the analysis of the selected extracts. The company holds on average two meetings at managerial level a month, with the managing director chairing. Attending these meetings is the financial manager, the IT manager, the group's PR manager, the HR manager, fleet manager, the operations manager, the company secretary and appointed board members, and in two of the meetings recorded, there was a consultant who had been invited to analyse the business.

ODT Insurance Company is headquartered in Harare with five offices countrywide. The company employs 170 people. The offices where the recordings took place are located in Harare, Zimbabwe. The core nature of the company's business involves selling insurance to both corporate and private clients.

On average, 10 men and four women take part in these meetings. Meetings are very formal. Relevant documents are circulated prior to the meeting. A total of five meetings totalling seven hours were recorded from this data site. The nature and character of the meetings will

be referred to in the analysis in close reference to the data. The company holds on average one meeting at managerial level a month, with the CEO of the company chairing. All unit heads attend these meetings.

WES Company is a motor vehicle outlet and insurance company headquartered in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, with five offices countrywide. The company employs 135 people. The offices where the recordings took place are located in Bulawayo. The core nature of the company's business involves selling insurance to both corporate and private clients.

On average seven men and three women take part in these meetings. Meetings are relatively formal. Relevant documents are circulated prior to the meeting. A total of six meetings totalling twelve hours were recorded from this data site. The nature and character of the meetings will be referred to in the analysis in close reference to the data. The company holds on average two meetings at managerial level about twice a month, with the financial director chairing.

Truba Bank has its headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe, with six branches countrywide. Truba Bank is one of several new banks in the country. It started operating in 1995. Its core structure is similar to those of other conventional banking institutions. The people in senior management come from a variety of backgrounds are at various stages in their careers, and most of them were headhunted. The people who sit in these meetings embody many types of expertise. In addition, the meetings at this site function in some respects as a 'journal club', a standard platform in marketing meetings for reporting and drawing on other's experiences or to discuss some piece of work in progress. The company employs 260 people. The offices where the meetings took place are located in Harare. At this site, I was only afforded attendance rights where I could make notes, but was not permitted to use my tape recorder. (For a fuller discussion of the data collection method used at this site, see 4.2.3 below). The core nature of the company's business involves innovative retail and corporate banking.

On average 15 men and 10 women take part in these meetings. Meetings are strictly formal. Relevant documents are circulated prior to the meeting. A total of six meetings totalling five hours were observed from this data site. The nature and character of the meetings will be referred to in the analysis in close reference to the data. The company holds on average one board meeting at managerial level a month, with the chairman of the board chairing.

Below is a tabled summary of the activities at each site.

Table 1: Summary of the activities at each site

Name of company	No. of meetings recorded	No. of hours captured	No. of participants	Type of data collected
Safari Company	11 meetings recorded	39 hrs	12 men and 6 women	Recorded and ethnographic data
ODT Insurance Company	5 meetings recorded	7 hrs	10 men and 4 women	Recorded and ethnographic data
WES Company	6 meetings recorded	12 hrs	7 men and 3 women	Recorded and ethnographic data
Truba Bank	6 meetings observed	5 hrs	15 men and 10 women	Ethnographic data plus three transcribed meetings
Total	**28 meetings**	**63 hours**	**44 men and 23 women**	

The additional three men and six women who make up the figures to 47 and 29 respectively only took part in the FGDs, and were not part of the meetings recorded or observed. These are men and women with whom I had initial interviews and explained the purpose of my intended research as I sought to gain entry into the companies where they worked. During the course of my research study, I was able to hold ongoing conversations with them as I sought corroboration or affirmation of points gathered at the four data sites. These contacts proved invaluable as most of the comments were made 'off the record' and the participants could therefore afford to be very candid.

In conducting research in the companies cited above, I was however mindful of the fact that I needed to gain information from the front stage and back stage as practices found in the workplace are, as argued by Sarangi and Roberts (1999), embedded in wider social and historical orders and it was therefore necessary to gain a fuller understanding of the research site before and after recording.

4.2.3   Data collection procedures

In this section, I discuss the data collection methods, justify how the data for analysis was selected, and discuss the details of how it was treated. The table below gives an outline and overview of the phases undertaken in the various data collection procedures used during the period June 2003 to February 2004, the approximate time taken to cover each activity, the reason for each phase, and lastly general comments and information related to the procedure.

Table 2: Phases undertaken in data collection procedures

Phase	Activity	Time	Rationale	Comment/information
1	Search for suitable companies, statement of intent and formal application for entry	4 weeks	To find companies with a mixed composition of men and women sitting in senior management meetings	Faced with much suspicion and reluctance on the part of many companies
2	Selection of companies for case study	1 day	Decided on same type service based industries	Initially, companies struggled with the idea of an outsider sitting in on meetings and recording
3	Pre-test	3 hours	Done at two sites and in two meetings to assess the type and nature of meetings, reaction of subjects of research to hardware, as well as logistics of recording and gathering of ethnographic description	Information gathered at this stage informed the research going forward
4	Construction of initial interview questions for focus group discussions as well as for member checking phase	3 weeks	Questions informed by research aims and insights from pre-test and from the initial discussions held with three women in senior management positions	These were used initially as a discussion guide as I gathered information at the data sites
5	Recording of meetings at the different sites; altogether 28 meetings were recorded	Total no. of hours: 63 over 6 months	Targeted meetings in which there were a moderately high number of women present; type of meeting was an important consideration. Collected ethnographic data before, during and	Total no. of participants recorded: 44 men and 23 women NB An additional 9 individuals participated in the preliminary discussions and FGDs only and were not part

Phase	Activity	Time	Rationale	Comment/information
			soon after the recorded and observed meetings.	of the recordings (for fuller explanation see 4.2.2 above)
6	Transcription of 22 hours of data	5 months	Transcription code selected (Sacks, 1984) (see Appendix B for annotation details)	Assisted by research fellow and MA students in corroborating my own transcription
7	Member checking	2 weeks	To ensure the accuracy of data, correct presentation to make allowance for deletion of information regarded by company as highly confidential	Member checking with two female volunteers from two of the research sites
8	Initial reading of data and individual interviews	2 weeks	To pick out themes, trends and tendencies and to tease out data	Essential phase in preparation for round 1 of FGDs
9	Round 1 FGDs	2 hours	To test the initial findings and to identify retrospectively with co-researchers, areas causing difficulty in communication in the boardroom	Men and women participated on willing basis
10	Second and third reading of data and initial analysis and interpretation	3 weeks	Read for feel alongside ethnographic notes to identify context codes and patterns of language use	Noting of emerging patterns
11	Subsequent readings of data, analysis and interpretation	2 months	Identification and selection of recurring patterns and themes and initial analysis; at this stage decisions were made as to the final selection and representativeness of particular extracts for detailed discussion in Chp 5	Held discussions with class of MA students who had been divided into 4 groups and each apportioned transcribed data from one of the 4 sites. Students asked to be sensitive with figures and names of other organisations cited in meetings
12	Presentation of initial findings to fellow researchers (at departmental research seminars) and consultation with supervisors	5 hours	Analysis to check, confirm and realign interpretation following discussion	Outcomes of presentation informed Round 2 of FGDs
13	Round 2 of FGDs	3 hours	To affirm and confirm findings and to get	Critical exercise which yielded relevant insights

Phase	Activity	Time	Rationale	Comment/information
			descriptions of language behaviour	and comments

The interactions discussed in this study came from a corpus of 28 meetings totalling 63 hours of recorded material that was collected in four workplaces during 2003 and 2004. The table above gives an outline of the procedures followed. Below, I give a fuller account.

Prior to the recordings, pre-research exploratory interviews were held with 'future' participants as well as with people who were themselves not part of the case studies, but were, by virtue of their jobs or status, familiar with the issues and concerns of the research. This was an essential exploratory phase during which I formulated the research questions. This was followed by identification of the four companies and the conducting of the pilot phase which worked as a pre-test before the launch of the research in earnest.

At the first and second research sites, the two companies that took part in the research as listed above, namely Safari Co and ODT Co were provided with tape recorders, and in some instances, the companies themselves used their dictaphones and were asked to record a range of the more discursive type meetings over a period of six months. Instructions to the companies were that they record, as far as possible, a wide range of meetings and that recording had to be, to a large extent, of issue-driven and problem-solving type meetings where high-level debate was likely to take place.

At the third data site (Wes Co), the company secretary initially took down minutes verbatim through shorthand, as a way of circumventing the problem of bringing in a tape recorder as members were sensitive to the hardware brought in by an outsider. This was the case in the first two meetings. Thereafter, a tape recorder was used to capture the proceedings of the meetings. It is possible that the secretary was not able to capture all the interactions verbatim, allowing for possible stenographer interpretation, misrepresentation and error. The data so gathered was nevertheless treated as authentic and formed part of the corpus. This will be discussed in detail in 4.6 below.

At the fourth data site (Truba Bank), I sat in during all the meetings, but was not allowed to use my own equipment to record. I was however afforded the rare opportunity of observing the interactions. The data collection procedure used at this site provided me with a wealth of
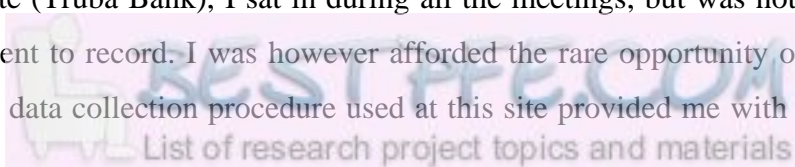
ethnographic information with which to contextualise interpretation at different levels. At this site, I was able to listen intently, take down detailed notes, observe phenomena that could not be captured on tape, and conduct interviews with individuals before and soon after meetings. I also had the opportunity to listen to the recordings on the company's dictaphone and to transcribe selected meetings (3 in total). I could however, only do this at their premises as I could not take the tapes with me for reference at a later date. I also had sight of the minutes of the meetings which I used in the analysis in Chapter 5.

At all the data sites, other ethnographic data was collected via a number of channels, including workplace observation even on days when there was no meeting to record. Exploratory discussions were held with participants and other individuals even when there was no recording scheduled. This was achieved by arriving early or late in the afternoon and establishing informal contacts with participants in their offices. I also had discussion cum interview sessions with participants on days that I had recordings which I refer to as pre- and post-recording briefings. In the time spent with participants in the initial pre-recording meetings, I found out permissible histories and personal details which would then form part of the backdrop to my findings. I also wrote notes during the meetings about the participants and what they said or did at the time of recording and in between meetings. In addition, I held telephonic conversations with respondents after the recording sessions to verify certain findings.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with subjects which were conducted after the initial recordings formed the bulk of the ethnographic data for this research. This method will be explained in section 4.2.5. This included the nine participants referred to in Table 2 above (Phase 5). Ethnographic-based studies proved essential in research of this nature as they have an interpretive character, which refers to the way that researchers can try to make sense of what goes on in the area of focused interest, in some objective sense as well as giving meaning to the experiences related by those they study.

As indicated in Table 2 (Phase7) above, after recording at the three sites was completed, the data was checked for accuracy and confidential information. The next stage which was the selection of data for analysis proved a challenging methodological issue for me. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, I was faced with organisational and practical constraints with regard to the question of how much of the recorded information I should use in the

analysis of the data. I was faced with two options: using the initial corpus made up of 63 hours of recording, which would have been in any case hardly feasible; or purposive sampling of data which involved initially identifying meetings and interactions of varying lengths from the overall corpus that were characterised by high levels of interaction between participants. I settled for the latter. I subsequently selected substantial sections totalling approximately 27 hours of audiotape including data from Truba bank site. In choosing samples, I was guided by Fairclough (1992:230) who suggests that the answer to this predicament is that '…samples should be carefully selected on the basis of a preliminary survey of the corpus, taking advice where one can get it from those being researched (see Table 2 Phase 9), or from colleagues in relevant social science disciplines, so that they yield as much insight as possible into the contribution of discourse to the social practice under scrutiny'. He further suggests, 'as a selection strategy which has much to recommend it, […] to focus on […] moments in the discourse where there is evidence that things are going wrong: a misunderstanding which requires participants to 'repair' a communicative problem, for example through asking for or offering repetitions, or through one participant correcting another; exceptional disfluencies (hesitations, repetitions) in the production of a text; silences; sudden shifts of style.' He also recommends that one can use 'participants' retrospective judgements about points of difficulty' which would serve to highlight practices which might normally remain opaque and therefore difficult to notice, for the researcher looking in from the outside. As an initial step in the selection process, long monologues and portions of meetings where there was not much debate, where the recording was poor or where the meeting had deteriorated into pockets of parallel discussions for example, were excluded. The sections to be used for analysis were then selected from different time segments of the meetings (early, midway and late into the discussion). I also made an effort to select the samples from different types of meetings which included strategic, operational, issue-driven, problem-solving and progress report type meetings. The 'text' for the initial stage of analysis (see Table 2: Phase 11) was therefore not randomly picked, but was selected in a principled way to ensure relevant focus and representativeness. The table below indicates the number of extracts derived from each site for close analysis in Chapter 5.

Table 3: Number of extracts selected from each data site

Name of company	No. of extracts	No. of recording hours
Safari Company	17	9:05
ODT Insurance Co.	20	5:54
WES Company	8	6:45
Truba Bank	10	5:16
Total	**55**	**27**

In order to be inclusive, I also made a deliberate effort to select and focus in certain instances on all-female discourse, all-male discourse and men and women in symmetrical and asymmetrical dialogue. For the process of verification of my own selection and listing of recurring patterns and themes, I enlisted help from the MA Linguistics class of 2004 (see Phase 11 in Table 2). The MA students were divided into four groups and each was given the transcriptions of the sample data from a particular site. Their task was to identify any emerging patterns and themes and my aim was to 'check and verify' their selection against my own initial identification by using them as a sounding board to test out my own initial findings.

I was further guided by the fact that in meetings, participants were evidently preoccupied with managing conversation and presenting themselves to best advantage. The selection of extracts for detailed analysis (used in Chapter 5) then followed and this was achieved through an even closer examination of the transcribed data as noted in Table 2 (Phase 11) above. Chunks of talk that were seen as representing typical instances of identified patterns of language behaviour were subsequently selected for closer analysis and comment. Further to that, the major examples of each interactional mechanism which were produced by more than one speaker were selected for further analysis. These selected extracts, drawn from across a number of meetings, were subsequently used for comparison with apparently similar stretches in other selected texts identified as constituting a variant of a particular structure and having apparently similar features. I also used a top-down approach and a degree of researcher intuition to select the most representative excerpts. These extracts were then taken through a process of analysis using CA, pragmatics and CDA as they were examined in detail for what Fairclough (1992) terms their 'meaning potential' in order to generate a sound understanding of the pragmatic meaning of utterances in given contexts. The method and process of analysis

described here is demonstrated in 4.3.5. It is important to point out that the data gathered from the four research sites were treated as one corpus, as the research aim was to note the linguistic and interactional behaviour of men and women in senior management meetings in the corporate world and not at particular worksites. My main concern was with the features used and not the worksites, but I do, where relevant, compare and contrast some of the more obvious similarities and differences in language use at the different worksites.

The extracts I discuss in Chapter 5 were therefore chosen for their representativeness and potential content (detail) to indicate the range of both direct and indirect discourse strategies and practices which individuals, men and women, use in meetings. Data from outside the chosen selections will occasionally be referred to when it adds substantially to a point made in the discussion. In some instances, additional examples of recurring features that came out of the data were picked from the corpus through use of the edit-find function of MS Word, and where a lexical item of interest to the analysis recurred a number of times, this was noted, analysed in terms of function, and used as additional supporting reference. In addition, the corpus also provided 'a larger context' for the 'selected texts' upon which the analysis was based.

The holding of the initial and second round of the FGDs enabled the testing and validation of my preliminary findings and those derived from the analyses done by the MA students referred to above in Table 2 (Phase11). This was followed by a process where I compared my findings with the descriptions given by the FGD respondents to see if there was corroboration. As part of the verification process, it became necessary at this stage to go back to my data and conduct further probing aimed at acquiring as near accurate as possible, a description of the language behaviour of the men and women participants who formed part of my study.

In Appendix A, I present, for purposes of illustration, transcribed data from an entire meeting that in my view represents very well the kind of talk and interactions that were recorded, observed, transcribed and analysed. This was the third meeting recorded at the Safari Co. This transcript will often be referred to where applicable in the analysis and discussion in Chapter 5.

4.2.4   Pre-test as pilot study

At the onset of the research, a pre-test was preferred over a lengthy pilot study, following a distinction made by Yin (1989) between 'pilot tests' and 'pre-tests.' Pre-tests are more suitable where the method of enquiry is by way of instruments such as use of the tape recorder or observation method where the researchers may need to fine-tune their instrument during operations to test their notions, but without being able to repeat the activity. In his explanation, Yin views the pre-test as aiding investigators to refine their data collection plans with respect to the procedures to be followed. This would represent the actual research method in minuscule. The experimental recordings done at, for example, the newspaper company which can be associated with the pre-test method were in this instance regarded fundamentally as case studies in their own right, but with an essentially exploratory function. I, as researcher, was then able to modify and adjust the planned method of data collection informed by preceding findings. The pilot test on the other hand is, as it were, a 'laboratory for the investigators', allowing them to observe different phenomena from many different angles or to try different approaches on a trial basis (Yin, 1989:74) before they actually begin the research in earnest.

Given the limitations and problems associated with gaining right of entry described in 4.5 below, a lengthy pilot study was clearly not the preferred option. As a result therefore, for this study, the procedures and events of the first three board meetings served as both experimental ground and learning experience (See Table 2, phase 3). It was possible, after these initial encounters, to work out the logistics of what type of meetings were likely to yield rich data, which boards were more accessible, which taping equipment was more suited to the task, how far in advance people needed to know of the event and how long it might take before participants carried on with 'business as usual.' As an example of observer paradox, the women at the first management meeting that I recorded as part of the pre-test remained silent throughout the 45-minute meeting. I attributed this to the likely fact that the chairperson had overemphasised the objective and focus of my research but subsequent meetings went on as 'normal'.

4.2.5   Focus group discussions (FGDs)

As pointed out above (in 4.2.3), part of the research design involved the use of Focus group discussions (FGDs) or collaborative interviews which can, as argued by Langellier and Hall (1989), provide insight into the phenomenon of study by providing descriptions of lived experience. The type of interview discussed here, one that is closely linked to feminist scholarship (Langellier and Hall, 1989) and based on the principle that men and women should have equal opportunities for self-expression, seeks to explore and explain the essence of power as lived experience. In pursuit of this goal, the FGD, a process through which common experiences can be shared and contrasted through discussion, has emerged as a useful approach to data collection. Langellier and Hall (1989) and Oakley (1981), who themselves have used the research method, point out a number of advantages associated with it.

Firstly, this form of interview serves to construct a narrative of understanding through storytelling and sharing of experiences. Secondly, the approach emphasises understanding coming out of communicative interaction and looks for assumptions and meanings beneath the surface of everyday life, bracketed by a historical, political and social context, to come away with sensitivity to meaning through shared experience. In addition, it further encourages the subjects of research to step back and critically analyse situations and critical incidents in which they themselves have been involved and ones which may have affected their beliefs, attitudes or behaviours. FGDs have the added advantage of accessing information in a conversation mode, which allows for expansion on descriptions provided in individual interviews or from transcribed data which is more likely to yield 'a thick description' of the phenomena under study. By expanding on descriptions provided in individual interviews, Cooks and Hale (1992) believe that the researchers and interviewees can enhance and extend their understanding of the issues under discussion, thus learning from one another while simultaneously, the researcher gets a little closer to the essence of the experience as it becomes possible to ask more searching and probing questions in a more relaxed atmosphere. This form of interview also promotes non-hierarchical relationships between the researcher and the subject. The more formal and often inhibitive interview mode was therefore not a choice.

The interviewer and interviewee are, in this case, as pointed out by Cameron et al. (1992) (see 1.3) considered 'co-researchers', researching *with* and not *on* or *for*, an important ideological and methodological point which hinges on the 'co-researchers' being equally committed to gaining better understanding of the experience. The emerging voices of the 'co-researchers' and the issues they raise are then considered as indicators of the situations that may obtain in similar workplaces. This becomes a key element in achieving quality of the information required; the mainstay of qualitative research methodology. In contrast to the traditional interviewing methods that tend to be more general, the phenomenological interview (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) which seeks to focus on the chief subjects of research in this case, women in senior management meetings, was preferred.

Three phases of phenomenological research outlined in the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), Lanigan (1984), Nelson (1989), Peterson (1987) and Cooks and Hale (1992), among others, were employed in analysing the data collected through the FDGs. These phases were: description, reduction and interpretation.

In the phenomenological sense, description implies a concretisation and grounding of experiences into some significant form. Cooks and Hale (1992) emphasise that transcribing and placing the data under some kind of telescopic gaze in order to find some significant story or detail in the interviews, is necessary if the researcher is to come away with accounts and experiences that can be described and grouped into revealing themes.

The next stage in the analysis is that of reduction. Peterson (1987) recommends that the researcher's task is not simply to establish consensus on the commonly experienced phenomena. Rather, the researcher needs to look at ways in which meaning becomes evident in the data and how it can be deduced from the context. It is necessary to recognise the limitations of reduction as a function of interpretation in the process of arriving at meaning, as different analysts may attach different meanings to a single utterance.

Reflection on the themes coming out of the description and reduction phases leads naturally into the final data analysis phase of interpretation. In this phase, the themes found in the reduction phase are inserted back into the text to find the textual features and linguistic forms conveying or representing the speakers' ideology that will aid in the construction of understanding of the relevant utterances. The whole process requires what Merleau-Ponty

(1962) calls 'hyper-reflection' between the stages describing the phenomena (in this case language, power, gendered utterances and the positioning of ideas) until, as Cooks and Hale (1992) explain, a description is recovered from the discussion which captures the essence that represents the 'typical' experiences of the participants.

To this end, the interview protocol (see Appendix C) was designed to elicit descriptions of experiences and the details of everyday life at the workplace and the values that women, and men, hold for themselves. Patton (1980) and Langellier and Peterson (1984) have suggested the combined use of individual and group interviews to arrive at fuller interpretive understanding developed through conversation. The co-researchers were themselves not unaware of their situations in circumstances of power play. It was therefore necessary to find out what the women perceived as 'going on' in the situations under which they worked. It was felt that this could be realised through conducting an interpretive enquiry in which the women themselves and a few of their male counterparts could be prompted to share their personal experiences of boardroom interaction.

The individual and FGD interview questions were loosely structured around the experience of meetings and situations of language use and power imbalance within workplaces. Drawing from Patton's (1990) guidelines for doing qualitative research, the co-researchers were asked for descriptions around the conduct of meetings and whether women and men used similar interactional mechanisms in the positioning of their ideas in meetings. Initially only a few members who volunteered for the experience were interviewed individually and were taken through a number of pre-set questions (see appendix C) and their responses were noted and coded (see Table 2 Phase 8). Once the co-researchers had been interviewed individually, group meetings were then arranged. Under this research format, a group of respondents (generally numbering 8-12 in the three sessions held), was guided through discussion by myself. This was in part a way of checking if the same issues, concerns and themes would re-emerge in a group setting as had emerged from individuals, which would in itself be a kind of validation of experiences. The focus of the questions at the group discussions was determined by the outcomes of the individual interviews as well as the initial findings emerging from the initial analysis of the data. The open discussions made it possible to extract recurrent themes.

The focus group discussions provided a forum for the women and the few men who participated to further explore and expand on narrated experiences, as well as draw from each

other's accounts. The effectiveness of focus groups as a research tool depended on the level of interaction of the participants. Members of the three focus groups were evidently stimulated to respond by the comments and support of others in the group. In this way, the depth of information offered by a respondent was much greater than that obtained through individual interviews. The main focus of the exercise was to see if there was corroboration in the narratives.

Indeed much of the discussion was spent on women supporting and confirming each other's experiences. One woman would describe her own experiences while the others listened with interest. In this way, parallels were drawn, points of departure examined, and common understandings of interpretations reached. In the process of drawing patterns and gathering themes, individual voices and opinions did emerge.

During the FGDs I, as researcher, took on the role of participant observer and discussant. This took care of the ever-present danger of being regarded as decidedly an outsider. The discussions were held after work at one of the participant's offices. The participants, most of them women, were more than willing to share their experiences in this more informal and relaxed atmosphere, as they drew interesting parallels. Emerging themes were written onto a flip-chart which served as both menu board and record for the discussion. In listening to their accounts, I was taken backwards and forwards along the continuum, which exists between participant status and observer status. I was thus able to both observe and experience the interactions of people, and the meanings they extracted from each other from an insider as well as a vantage position. This immersion in the activities of my 'subjects' shed more light on the transcribed data from the board meetings, when I set about analysing and interpreting it.

In dealing with data of this nature, there is always the risk that differences between individuals will be obscured. It is important therefore to avoid representing the women in the data as though they constituted a single voice. I therefore recorded the utterances of the individual women in such a way as not to generalise their opinions. A few male co-researchers participated in the FGDs in order to bring balance to the discussion. The purpose of their inclusion was to get the views of the 'other' as well as for them to confirm or refute some of the claims that were emerging, a necessary strategy in seeking the trustworthiness of research findings.

The audiotapes of FGD interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions were used in the analysis and interpretation section in Chapter 5, alongside the transcriptions from the recordings of boardroom meetings.

4.3   Approaches to analysis and interpretation of data

In this main section, I discuss data analysis and interpretation as concepts in research. As background, I begin by giving a brief summary of the theoretical approaches that inform the analysis and interpretation of the data discussed earlier in Chapter 3. I then refer to a previous discussion in 4.2.3 (data collection procedures), to show how chunks of the data gathered were selected for close analysis. This is followed by a section that gives an overview of the co-dependency of analysis and interpretation as tools in research. A discussion of the explanatory framework used to make sense of the findings 'concludes' the section. I then give a worked example of how the analyses presented in Chapter 5 were done followed by a brief discussion of the factors and considerations that informed the interpretation of the selected excerpt.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the theoretical approaches adopted for this study offer the potential for a closer examination of the nature and distinctive characteristics of talk at the workplace. The data was tackled from within a social constructionist approach which, as explained in 3.9, looks at how 'discourse contributes to all those dimensions of social structure which directly and indirectly shape and constrain it…as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them' (Fairclough, 1992:64). The analytical tools of CA and pragmatics were then used together with CDA to arrive at a relatively accurate account of the pragmatic meanings of the utterances.

CA was employed to examine discourse at the micro-level of turn-by-turn organisation of talk with its inferential properties, such that everything said could be viewed as either directly reacting to preceding talk, reflecting a set of immediate circumstances, or responding to a past event, whether directly experienced or indirectly transmitted. Pragmatics was used alongside CA to explore utterance meaning beyond the literal sense through the necessary role that indexicality (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003:293) plays in talk, if interlocutors and
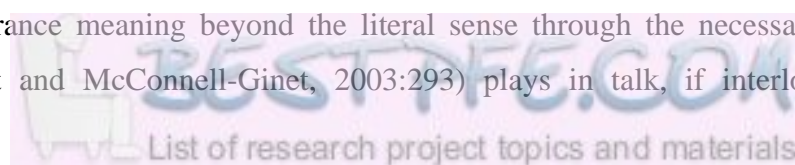
analyst alike are to arrive at shared meaning. CDA was used to explain the macro-aspects of context and social interaction by providing the contextual frame for situated interpretation. The analytical approaches, each in its own right, enabled the analyst to take account of the dynamic aspects of an interaction and to arrive at a richer explanation of it against the relevant context.

The extracts I discuss in Chapter 5 were chosen for their content, to indicate the range of both direct and indirect discourse strategies which individuals, men and women, use to 'say what they say'. The selected extracts identified as constituting a variant of a particular language feature are drawn from the various meetings recorded and attended. The identified extracts are then taken through a process of comparative analysis, and interpretation as they are examined in detail for their potential meaning. This process is discussed in detail in 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 and demonstrated in 4.3.5 below.

The extracts selected serve to show the complex and diverse ways in which particular linguistic devices are used in context to realise interaction strategies. The extracts essentially serve to show the fundamentally dynamic nature of discourse and the constant alignment and realignment of ideas and participants themselves, captured in the selected interaction sequence. Detailed analysis of how individuals shifted from, for example, 'exercising control' to 'expressing collegiality', 'seeking approval', 'issuing a challenge' or even 'doing friendship' in the workplace, surfaced in the data. Holmes et al. (1999) make an important observation that the same linguistic forms which may be noted in two apparently comparable extracts may be motivated by different factors at different points in an interaction, and particular discourse patterns may reflect quite different relational dynamics at different times, contexts and circumstances, giving each extract a character of its own. As Labov (1972) points out, it is not the range of devices or mechanisms that are found in a particular variety of language that are important, so much as the way in which individual speakers, who for purposes of this study are categorised into female and male, actually use whatever devices exist to express intent and the outcome thereof. This will be demonstrated in 4.3.5 below and illustrated more fully in Chapter 5.

4.3.1 Analysis and interpretation of data: an overview

As discussed in 3.8, analysis and interpretation of data as tools of research do not operate exclusively; rather, they jointly contribute to an understanding of the same. Wolcott (1994:10-11) explains how analysis involves a careful and systematic way of identifying emerging and recurrent themes and factors from the phenomena under investigation. Interpretation, on the other hand, being less scientific and more easily flawed by subjectivity, seeks to make sense of the data by reaching out for understanding or explanation beyond what can be explained with the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis. The two are mutually co-dependent with no clearly delineated boundary that marks the end of analysis and the beginning of interpretation. The 'evident hybridity' (Robson, 1997) of the two brings to the fore methodological concerns. One has to be keenly aware of when one is analysing for trends, on the one hand, and when one is seeking to interpret and explain understanding of the same on the other. Of equal importance also is the determination of the exact boundaries of an encounter and how far the analysts' selected interpretive framework can make sense of the data so collected. These considerations were taken account of during the analysis stage.

It appears evident therefore that as one enters the boardroom, as both discourse analyst and sociolinguist, to attempt to make sense of 'what is going on here?' (Cicourel, 1992), the issue of triangulation of interpretation becomes pertinent. This is an instance, as Cicourel points out, when discourse analysts need to supplement their analysis and interpretation of the data with feedback, in this case from co-researchers by way of FGDs for example. Triangulation, which is achieved through using a multiple approach to data collection, is relevant when analysing, interpreting and evaluating data from workplaces, which are by their very nature, 'sites of social struggle' (FGD respondent, Amy). In my study, triangulation of the data was achieved through the post-recording interviews, the discussions held in the FGDs, the occasional telephonic interviews with co-researchers and member checking of the transcribed data by some of the people that took part in the research.

Another methodological concern regarding analysing and interpreting data has to do with Atkinson's (1995) claim that discourse analysts should deal with extended data sites to include the extended contexts of the interactional encounter. For this reason, and as stated before, I spent time at the work sites that served as data sites, gathering ethnographic data that

would be used at the interpretation and explanation stage. This would approximate studies where ethnographic fieldwork is examined alongside recorded and transcribed talk data to come away with deeper understanding of situated interaction in institutional and professional settings. The holistic description coming out of these ethnographic accounts and descriptions of the workplace should attend to minute details and aim to understand the selected interactions in their interpretive complexity. Extended data sites also help to broaden the scope of a study of this nature, reaching down to the level of fine-grained linguistic analysis to come up with wider political, ideological, social and gendered readings amongst other findings and issues that may emerge. The sample analysis in 4.3.5 will demonstrate this.

During the analysis stage, not much reference to, or analysis of paralinguistic features was done as there was a methodological problem here in that, while it seemed useful to have a more complete record of what was going on in any sequence of talk, two or three video recorders would have been necessary in any one sitting to cover any group adequately. Having so much hardware in itself would probably be unacceptably intrusive. I also did not undertake a full and systematic analysis of intonational patterns either, given that most of the participants do not speak with an intonation typical of first language speakers (L1 British speakers) which would allow a corresponding comment of the various nuances of meaning that could be derived from the speaker's intonation. Most of the participants spoke using an intonation typical of Zimbabwean users of English. There is no available description either of Zimbabwean L2 intonation system to use as a guide to identify possible nuances of meaning realised in the intonation. Other accompaniments to talk such as seating arrangements, time of meeting, and size of room were only brought to bear where deemed relevant. I also observed that the various works of Sacks and Schegloff around conversation (from which I drew a great many insights into the workings of conversation and some useful analytic tools) are themselves characterised by a lack of emphasis on the study of systematic intonational and paralinguistic features.

4.3.2 Analysis of data

The data selected for analysis was examined in two stages. The first stage involved the initial reading of the text in an 'uncritical manner' (as discussed in 3.8) in order to get the gist of it, in preparation for the necessary 'member checking' with participants as co-researchers soon

after recording and transcribing, in order to verify the data – what Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) identify as '…the most crucial technique for establishing credibility.' As outlined in Table 2, Phase 10, the research data was then examined in a more critical manner in order to determine early the emerging themes and trends. In addition, the preliminary reading and analysis proved crucial in the identification of what Bogden and Biklen (1982) call 'context codes' as the data was 'combed through' and carefully 'sifted' before being organised into manageable themes or phenomenological groupings that were coded, tested (in Round 1 FGDs) and later used as headings in the analysis. For example, a theme that emerged, and one that I then used in Chapter 5 was 'topic control'. The transcribed data was repeatedly and at various times re-examined in order to confirm the initial coding under which the recurring themes were listed and classified.

At the second stage of data analysis, the transcribed data from the FGDs was transcribed and the field notes were coded and grouped according to how the data from the boardroom meetings had been processed and emerging patterns and relevant detail checked and discussed with other researchers and supervisors (see Table 2, Phase 12). The confirmed details from the ethnographic information were then used in the analysis in support of the primary data transcribed from the audiotapes.

For the actual fine-grained analysis of the extracts, two approaches were used. Initially, analysis of discourse focused on the process of conversation and proceeded from the bottom up, to establish and examine the smallest units that made up a conversational sequence, made up from individual utterances and turns. This was followed by a close analysis of the linguistic features used to express meaning and interpreted against the backdrop of context. During this stage of the analysis, the analytical approaches and tools outlined in Chapter 3 were used to help in the analysis of the data. The tools consist of a range of questions related to CA, pragmatics and CDA that I kept to the fore as I attempted to analyse the linguistic behaviour of participants during talk-in-interaction based on the extracts presented. Where possible, the extracts were used to produce a comparative analysis with apparently similar data in other texts identified as constituting a variant of a particular structure. Fairclough (1992) and Van Dijk (2000) argue that analysts can use a number of approaches in developing analyses. In my analysis of conversation, I did not therefore confine myself to the traditional view of linguistic analysis which limits itself to the study of sentences or smaller grammatical units. Instead, I focused on what Fairclough (1992:3) terms 'higher–level organisational

properties of dialogue' such as turn-taking (CA) and upon the interaction between addressor and addressee which studies processes of production and interpretation of an utterance (pragmatics) embedded in a situational context of language use and practice (CDA).

A range of questions, based on the basic tenets of CA, pragmatics and CDA guided me through the analysis as I sought to understand and explain the conduct of the interactants and the issues they discussed. In relation to CA, I examined turn structure and how turns developed into sequences. I asked how a particular speaker had obtained the turn and at what point in the conversation, how the turn had ended and whether the speaker had selected the next speaker and if so, how they had done this. Was it by gesture, gaze or did they refer to them by name? If so, what inferences can be drawn from the action? Had the next speaker self selected and if so how and at what moment had this been accomplished? Was this done at a transition relevant place and did the speech of the second speaker overlap the turn of the first or was the speaker on the floor interrupted and if so, what was the possible cause and subsequent reaction? Did speakers compete for the floor and was there conflict over topic control or were the 'rules' of conversation followed? How did the current speaker give up a turn and to whom? I also analysed how conversation was managed and the mechanisms used to achieve control at macro- and micro levels of interaction.

At the interpretation level, I referred to aspects of pragmatics and examined how meaning is constructed by looking at the interface between form and function to produce a comprehensive descriptive system from the conversation studied. According to Austin (1962), many utterances are the simultaneous performance of locutionary act, illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect. I then sought to distinguish between the two intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of verbal communication. I looked critically for what Leech (1983) calls the informative intent or the sentence meaning, and the other, the communicative intent or speaker meaning. To determine the different kinds of meaning I asked questions such as:

What exactly was said on a given occasion?
How was it structured?
What was its propositional content and function?
What conversational norms are being observed during interaction?
Did the ways in which participants speak imply particular identities, roles and relationships?

How was this meaning transferred?

What linguistic devices were used to achieve intended meaning and uptake by the listener?

Did the listener observably understand the speaker's intention?

What was the effect of the utterance on the listener?

What was the observed listener interpretation of the utterance?

What other description of the speech event and all its other components are necessary in order to achieve valid interpretation?

Was the interactant's way of talking appropriate across a wide range of roles, statuses, identities and relationships?

For an effective analysis, I also made an appeal to a variety of features from pragmatics which include politeness strategies, irony, presuppositions and elements of deixis. These were discussed briefly in Chapter 3.

Fairclough's (1989a) questions in the context of his three-way framework of description, interpretation and explanation were also referred to. I for instance, examined the way the utterances were framed by checking what sort of perspective or point of view was being presented, the text type and the text structure in order to determine what Fairclough (1989a) refers to as 'a text's global coherence' or the representations of characteristic patterns associated with the organisation of a text from a particular discourse type.

 At the interpretation and explanation stage (CDA), I, at various stages in the analysis and where applicable, made an appeal to elements of social practice and analysed the institutional and organisational contexts which included the physical, social and cultural aspects of the discursive encounter and how they shaped the nature of the discursive practice. As part of the FDGs, I asked questions about the situational contexts surrounding the discursive encounters, their occasion and the roles and statuses of the participants. I looked at the other variables such as gender, age, length of service of participating individuals and the conduct of each meeting and how participants related to one another as individuals and as part of a group. In both the individual and group interviews, I also looked for evidence of participants' understanding and interpretation of the interactions observed by attending to the more minute levels of analysis: sentences, phrases and words which, according to Widdowson (1998) is relevant to CDA as the texts of a particular community exemplify how some sections of the community exercise control over access. This enabled me to focus on evidence of how people

'do power' by examining sentences to decide about, for instance, who is depicted as in power and over who, who is depicted as powerless and passive, who is exerting power over who and why. This property of text is referred to as 'agency', and can remain opaque and at the subconscious level unless made visible by the analyst.

At the sentence level, as discussed by Fairclough (1989a) and Huckin (2007), omission of information about the agents of power most often achieved by nominalisation and the use of the passive verb can be used on purpose to omit certain facts as a way of retaining power through the withholding of information. Speakers can also talk about things in such a way that they, or someone, else is depicted as the agent who initiates actions and is therefore exerting power. Fairclough (1989b) further argues that presuppositions can also occur at the sentence level in the form of persuasive rhetoric that can be used to convey the impression that what an agent of power says carries more weight. Insinuations are another tool that can be used to carry double meanings and undertones which the holder of power can choose to use to show a degree of suspicion as a way of undermining the position of their interlocutor. A speaker can also claim innocence, pretending to have only one of the possible meanings of an utterance in mind. Because of this deniability, insinuations can be an important and powerful tool in discourse. Furthermore, connotations associated with one word or through metaphors and figures of speech which are often culture bound can be used by a speaker to introduce a subtext and meaning not immediately clear at the surface level, what Hodge and Kress cited in Widdowson (1998) call an ideologically complex text. Similarly, as with the full body of the text, single words can convey the register of a text and thus the intention of the speaker. Register refers to the level of formality or informality and the degree of technicality depending on the subject field that the discourse is taking place in so that speakers, through the words they use, can induce a degree of trust or scepticism in their listeners. The use of the first, second and third person for example, can convey different messages around the objectivity of the information or its authority. As suggested by Fairclough (1989a), I also looked for political alignments of speech (topicalisation or foregrounding) which would assist in analysing what was going on in the text. In choosing what to put in the topic position, speakers create a perspective, or slant, that influences the listener's perception.

Lastly, I tried to gauge the tone or modal force of the different discourses. The tone of the discourse is set with the use of specific words to convey the degree of certainty and authority that the speaker exercises. McGregor (2007:6) argues that 'the tone of doubt or surety,

introduced by using words such as *may, might, could, will, can, must, it seems to me, without a doubt, It's possible that, maybe, or probably,'* can determine the power of the discourse and the speaker. She argues further that 'moods of heavy handed authority or deference can be created simply by choice of verb or modal phrase, which assert or deny the possibility, impossibility, contingency or necessity of something'.

The fine-grained analysis of the texts was followed by a discussion of the whole sequence, as I summarised and commented on the more salient group features in context. This was used as a follow-on approach (see 3.1 the Birmingham School approach) to give a description of the whole encounter after it had been analysed piecemeal. It was believed that this combination of analytic approaches would provide analysis that is superior to one using either approach on its own. In addition to trying to describe features of interaction noted, the data were also analysed, coded and considered according to gender of participant in order to address the underlying research interest. It was also in certain instances analysed quantitatively, through a count of like instances, to bring out the prevalence of some of the aspects being explored. Following Hak's (1995) argument about researcher rights, I also allowed myself the privilege to, when relevant, 'dip' into the full corpus (that which was transcribed) for corroborating detail or to come up with a count of similar instances if a true picture of the tendencies noted earlier was to emerge. In this regard though, I tried to avoid merely comparing women's total usage of a given feature with men's, without first ascertaining that they were using the structure in comparable ways. I was also mindful of the fact that no two instances of communication involving the same or different interlocutors, can ever produce one-for-one comparable features as various factors like situational context, the interlocutors themselves, and the general atmosphere of the meeting, have a bearing on the nature of an interaction. The process of analysis of an extract will be exemplified in 4.3.5 below. The extracts also serve to show the complex and diverse ways in which particular linguistic devices are used in context for intended meaning. In my study, I deliberately focused on women participants to analyse how gender, as a form of identity, is accomplished in discourse.

The data analysis stage also draws on knowledge of the companies participating in the investigation. Section 4.2.2 above includes brief descriptions of the company profiles, their corporate culture and modus operandi, job titles of participants, professional qualifications, gender and so on, which will be referred to in the analysis of the data. This historical and situational foregrounding, as Vakalisa (cited in Chisaka 2000:106) points out, forms "the

essential elements of qualitative inquiry', as it makes it possible for the reader to appreciate the match between utterance, situation and interpretation.

4.3.3 Interpretation of data

Interpretation in research refers to the process of reaching out for understanding beyond the stage of analysis as researchers try to make sense of the data before them. Wolcott (1994) gives a definition that presents interpretation as a threshold in thinking during which the researcher moves away from mere looking at factual data and compartmentalising it into themes, and begins to probe into what is to be made of them. This definition sets the ground for what lies at the centre of research, namely interpretation. In this study, interpretation was based on what Gumperz, cited in Sarangi and Roberts (1999:457), states is what '…is perceptibly said through inference, via processes that in turn rest on a finite set of general, essentially social principles of conversational cooperation, rooted in the local circumstances in which it was produced.'

As Duranti and Goodwin (1992) reaffirm, context is critical to the process of interpretation and must to a large extent be approached from the viewpoint of participants. They state the four theoretical frameworks of context as:

(a)   The setting of a social and physical framework in workplace interactions;

(b)   The behavioural environment of the workplace, which includes non-verbal communication and use of social space;

(c)   Language as context, where language calls up contexts and provides context for talk; and

(d)   Extra-situational context which draws on wider social, political and cultural institutions and discourses.

The three analytical approaches of conversation analysis, pragmatics and critical discourse analysis discussed in Chapter 3 can be and were enhanced by the four dimensions above as the different dimensions of context are critical for the interpretation of meaning, with interactional sociolinguistics as the overarching frame, used to lend meaning to the analysis of the data. Studies in work settings require that researchers insert themselves into relatively

unfamiliar settings, thus making theoretical and methodological issues of what constitutes the domain to be researched particularly tough questions to answer. Issues of context and contextualisation in research are discussed extensively by Silverman (1997), Hak (1995) and Gumperz (1992) and I was mindful of their different positions in the interpretation of the data.

Silverman (1997) takes what CA researchers would assert is a key principle of their sub-discipline, namely that context which surrounds talk is not something given, but is interactionally accomplished in the talk itself. He further argues for the importance of analysing the 'how' of talk first before collecting data on the wider context and issues in understanding the 'why,' This he contends is necessary since it is only in the participants' observable conduct that a particular context is authenticated.

Hak (1995) on the other hand, asks the fundamental question of how much context should be brought in to act as a backdrop against which 'talk at the workplace' and 'talk about work' can be analysed. He examines the centrality of talk and how work is constituted in talk, as well as how far it can account for the complexity and subtlety of workplace practices.

Gumperz (1992) takes the middle position in bridging the arguments of Silverman and Hak in a number of ways, but more importantly in the way that he explores how diversity enters into the interpretive process and how 'contextualisation cues' are crucial in understanding how intent is communicated. Chick (1985), in discussing interaction in a tutorial in an African context, discusses further how misunderstanding of the ways in which different cultures communicate can lead to a misjudgement of the competences of a learner interacting with a lecturer from a different cultural background. This observation has relevance in this study in that interactants came from different cultures (Ndebele and Shona and men and women brought up under different socialisation processes) I also, as did the interactants themselves, necessarily relied on 'practical reasoning' (Garfinkel (1967) and the unstated, taken for granted background knowledge to fill in for what was left unsaid; what I would call a marriage of sorts between common sense, researcher intuition and analytical understanding.

The selected representative interactions were viewed as typical, and were used for exploratory and explanatory purposes in the analysis. As discussed above, the primary data from the audiotapes was linked to the ethnographically compiled data, and throughout, the same data

was examined critically through CA, pragmatics and CDA, to lend meaning to what emerged at the data sites which were the context of the interactions analysed.

In a study of this nature, CA, pragmatics and CDA used in combination should provide productive explanatory frameworks for analysing meaning in interaction (see 3.12) Ethnographically-based studies of naturally occurring interaction of a particular group permit the sociolinguistic researcher to view critically, not only the sequential and interactional order of an encounter, but also the communicative strategies that interlocuters used to achieve intended meaning and uptake by the listener. Analysis and interpretation of utterances was done against the background of the immediate context of its production. The analytical approaches, each in its own right, enabled me further to take account of the dynamic aspects of an interaction and to determine which identities were displayed and oriented to at a particular point, and where and how shifts were signalled, as any contribution or turn in an encounter both responds to what precedes it, and affects what follows. The sequential structures in an interaction provided the means by which interactants jointly constructed a particular social order and came to a shared interpretation of what was going on (Drew and Heritage, 1992) and helped shape the response and its alignment. The possible multiple contexts, which could range from the social, cultural, historical to the psychological also provided a backdrop against which I could interpret the data and attempt an explanation of what was going on. By studying the fine-grained detail of sequentially organised talk in context, I was then able to ground my interpretations both in the evident understandings displayed by the participants (CA) and in the immediate interactional context (CDA), through an informed interpretation of the utterance (pragmatics), with ethnographic field notes providing the overarching commentary.

4.3.4   From interpretation to explanation

This subsection offers an overview of the possible explanations that the analyst may offer for the differences noted in the way men and women speak. I refer briefly to the view that Fairclough holds about CDA and the link between discourse and social practice. I also refer to the four possible explanatory frameworks outlined in 3.8 that have been used in the study of language and gender in interactional sociolinguistics. The examination of a number of

relevant explanatory theories provides a particularly sensitive test for understanding and documenting the possible power differentials between men and women.

Researchers have been concerned with the discourse strategies men and women use at the workplace with a view to understanding why and how they use certain interactional mechanisms to influence others and to acquire visibility and prestige. Researchers have also discovered that needs for expression and demonstration of power vary significantly between men and women and it is one of the aims of this study to find out why those apparent differences occur. Certain ways of communication at the workplace have a bearing on the type of power and influence strategies individuals have. When people engage in conversation or discussion in high level settings, they are in effect engaged in an important political activity in which existing power relations dictate the way people interact. As Frost (1987:507) points out, communication at the workplace 'provides the means through which power can be exercised, developed, maintained and enhanced.' Fairclough (1992:199) suggests further, that talk at the workplace can therefore be positioned in relation to hegemonic struggles which make it 'open to being ideologically and politically invested.'

In explaining why men and women use different communicative norms, I refer largely to, and where relevant, interpret the data against the backdrop of the gender-role socialisation theory. There is a strong justification for using the gender-role perspective as the main framework for explaining the various influence strategies used by men and women in the workplace. As discussed in 3.8 above, proponents of gender-role socialisation suggest that men and women are acculturated into different strategies for using power. Gaidzanwa (1985) discusses how the speech strategies often used by women to influence others are viewed as weak, while men tend to employ direct and concrete influence options, which results in them being viewed as more competent and more powerful language users. Interactional researchers such as Gumperz (1977) and Coates (1986, 1988, 1993) have supported the claims advanced by the gender-role perspective, arguing that men and women display different clusters of discourse strategies. They attribute much of the difference to the socialisation experiences that men and women undergo. Researchers studying the organisational context have also generally reinforced the gender-role theories.

In explaining men and women's use of different communicative strategies, I also in part refer to, and where relevant, interpret the data against the backdrop of the difference theory which

is itself closely linked to the gender-role socialisation theory. The approach emphasises the notion that women and men belong to different subcultures where they are socialised in different sociolinguistic subcultures and that the differences in women's and men's linguistic behaviour are interpreted as reflecting these different subcultures.

I also draw cautiously however, from the dominance approach which stresses the hierarchical nature of gender relations, given the fact that attendees at the meetings from which I drew my data form part of senior management in the organisations in which they work and should therefore be of equal standing, although portfolios are open to different perceptions regarding their importance. The dominance approach, which interprets linguistic difference in women's communicative competence as a reflection of men's dominance and women's subordination, is used primarily to trace and show how dominance is achieved during talk-in-interaction. Likewise, I have not drawn much from the structuralist interpretation approach, because the data was drawn from male and female managers who held similar levels of position power in their organisations and one would need to study the organisational practice at each data site over a long period to be in a position to state categorically that men and women used language in a particular way in response to that particular organisation's practice.

It is important however to sound a word of warning. It is not possible to empirically observe the gender-role socialisation process since it occurs in the internal cognitive domain and is therefore a psychological process. At best, one can extrapolate how the process might occur by prospecting on the inputs and outputs of socialisation. As gender-role socialisation is not deterministic, nor a static and predictable process, and given that socialisation includes both prescriptive and elective elements, men and women can indeed behave in ways that are inconsistent with sex-role expectations for their gender. Furthermore, as Fairclough argues, analysts are not above the social practice they analyse, and one might therefore, expect them to be as self-conscious as possible about the resources they are drawing upon in interpreting and explaining discourse, and about the nature of the social practice of analysis itself - the structures which condition it, its orientation to positions in struggle, the outcomes from it and its effects upon struggles and structures.

In sum then, I am inclined to explain the noted tendencies of how men and women use language in meetings primarily in terms of the gender-role socialisation theory which

emphasises that men and women are born into different subcultures and that through the different socialisation experiences, they learn to behave in ways that are largely consistent with gender-role expectations. Men and women are therefore acculturated into using different strategies for expressing and using power and this, I argue, influences their linguistic and interactional behaviour.

4.3.5   Sample analysis

In this subsection, I demonstrate how the analysis and interpretation of data is conducted in Chapter 5. The three analytical approaches namely CA, which concerns itself with the mechanics of talk-in interaction; pragmatics, which examines language use and aspects of meaning; and CDA, which focuses on power, dominance, inequality and gender were discussed in Chapter 3 and these are used in analysing and interpreting the data. I then make a running commentary as I analyse the extract, and for purposes of demonstration, make explicit reference to the analytical approaches used. The sample analysis will be used as a step-by-step illustration of the process of analysis employed in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, however, the analysis will not be split per utterance as below but will be presented as a description of the whole sequence. The turns in this excerpt have been marked 1-15 for purposes of commenting, but they are not be marked in a similar way in Chapter 5.

The following are the steps taken in the handling of an extract: The steps approximate Fairclough's (1989a) analytic framework, based on the three levels of description, interpretation and explanation.

Step 1:   Select extract representing selected linguistic feature(s).

Step 2:   Give brief background to the meeting.

Step 3:   Identify participants and their roles within the company.

Step 4:   Describe action in ongoing conversation and identify phenomena that can be investigated in the sequence

Step 5:   Analyse and interpret extract using CA, pragmatics, CDA and ethnographic information.

Step 6:   Explain observed phenomena with reference, where applicable to gender-role socialisation, difference, dominance and structuralist theories.

NB: Steps 5 and 6 have been shown here as separate but in the actual analysis here and in Chapter 5, these are combined as interpretation and explanation are arguably co-dependent. This phase of the analysis follows largely the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) top down model of analysis with its focus on the product of a chunk of conversation.

Illustrative excerpt

Step 1   Selection of representative extract from data

This particular extract demonstrates the way in which members of a meeting can collude against a poor performer.

Step 2   Background to meeting

The extract is drawn from a relatively short meeting. The meeting is one of the routine bi-monthly meetings held at this site for purposes of teams updating each other on what is happening across the business. Each team head leads by giving a report of the most pertinent issues coming from their area. Members present are free to request verification of points, to add on, to question or to seek assistance or cooperation.

Step 3   Participants

The persons attending the meeting and their respective roles were noted. In attendance were:

Lovemore (M)   chairperson

Derek (M)   group communications

Taurai (M)   sales

Mark (M)   IT

Boni (M)   HR

Martha (F)   training

Obert (M)   procurement

Maina (F)   marketing

Matondo (F)   deputy chair and accountant

Where relevant, field notes were referred to for additional context

Step 4   Initial description and analysis

(*Turn 1*)

Chairperson: Now if we can move on to the issue of procurement. As you are all aware, we will be moving some of our guys from the 5th floor to the 7th floor offices. We have already discussed the reasons why and so let's not debate that any further. This we hope will be as smooth an operation as possible

This portion demonstrates the chair's role as he performs part of the procedural routine of closing off debate on the one issue (*Now we can move on…*) and draws the participants into this segment of the meeting. The use of the time marker (*now*) is used to point to the fact that enough time has been spent on the previous topic. The chair forecloses any debate on the move (*as you are all aware*) which seems to suggest that there was a lot of debate and possible resistance to the planned move (*so lets not debate that any further*).

(*Turn 2*)

Derek: What we need at this point is an update from time to time of where we are with the move and not be caught by surprise by the movers (laughter)

Derek, from group communications, ratifies the issue of the update by suggesting on behalf of all members present that what they need is (*an update.*) His suggestion is marked by a degree of implicit criticism (*from time to time*) as he paints a picture of the possible chaos that would result if the removers came in unannounced.

(*Turn 3*)

Taurai: But I thought Obert said at the last meeting that he was going to send information to that effect.

Taurai's enquiry is in fact a way of topicalising the matter of the move by bringing up an issue discussed at the last meeting (*but I thought…at the last meeting*) that has obviously not been resolved. This is also a subtle way of negatively evaluating Obert's performance.

(*Turn 4*)

Mark: He did but it was a general information letter. What WE would like to know, at least from MY side is the a-c-t-u-a-l date and time of the expected er… move. My guys need to be certain so they can let e-v-e-r-y-o-n-e know about the server and other issues related to the IT system.

In Mark's turn, two features merit attention. In answering the question raised by Taurai on behalf of Obert, Mark is in effect disempowering the very person that he purports to be

supporting (CDA). He then recruits the voice of the meeting (*what **we** would like to know*) and, as it were, to mitigate the blow (*at least from my side*) and proceeds to discuss the logistical issues revolving around IT systems which, by inference, should have been obvious to Obert.

(*Turn 5*)

Boni: I guess he forgot (laughter).

Boni's quip is as mischievous as it is damaging to Obert's professional standing. Men were, throughout the observed meeting confrontational at the slightest provocation. The laughter could be interpreted in one of two ways. At face value the participants at the meeting could be laughing at the joke. On another level, the interpretation could be that the procurement department is well-known for its poor performance and has been reduced to the laughing stock of the group. The type of humour in this instance could be interpreted as a confrontation avoidance strategy on the part of Boni to save Obert from further attack from the others, as the meeting breaks into laughter at this point.

(*Turn 6*)

Chair: No guys let's not laugh. I must say I have noted a marked improvement from the procurement team-is that not so Obert. Lets not go there ladies and gentleman.

It is significant that the chair has to come to Obert's rescue. Obert however fails to take advantage of this opening and take the floor to come up for himself.

(*Turn 7*)

Derek: What we are saying is that their communication MUST be more explicit and regular

Derek, again speaking on behalf of the meeting (*what **we** are saying*) is in essence summing up the debate even before Obert has a chance to explain. This is a clear example of a participant trying to regulate the progress of the meeting. This could be interpreted as condescending behaviour in a meeting where professionals are interacting.

(*Turn 8*)

Martha: If I may just add to what Derek has just said, I do not remember being consulted about preferences for office space, who the movers are, whether this will be done during office hours or not, at what time etc so we know not to book appointments around that time you know?

Martha begins by linking her utterance to the one before, a function of cooperative discourse and speech behaviour often associated with women. She attenuates her contribution as she asks for permission (*to add to what Derek...*). Her choice of words as she points out lack of consultation (*I do not remember being consulted*) in place of the more direct form (he did not consult us) are typical of the way women were noted in the data to use politeness strategies in the packaging of their ideas.

(*Turn 9*)

Chair: Obert what do you have to say for yourself? You need to speak up or else face the full wrath of these guys (laughter).

The chair intervenes on behalf of Obert for the second time and partially acknowledges the general feeling of the meeting (*or else face the full wrath*…), but in a humorous manner to, as it were, soften the attacks. This pre-allocation of a turn by the chair could however be noted as an instance of disempowerment of Obert by the chair.

(*Turn 10*)

Obert: Well I am actually surprised by all these comments. There is a notice up on our events board speaking to all your concerns. About your preferences etc, I expected people to come forward and book the space or~~~

Obert only manages to gain the floor after eight turns from the time the chair tabled the issue of procurement, and this is as a result of the chair's explicit invitation for him to speak (*Obert what do you have to say for yourself*). Once on the floor, Obert sounds ambivalent about what exactly is/was expected of him and timidly refers to a notice on the events board. In making reference to the notice board, he is being defensive. This way, he also fails to take on the voice of meetings and the authority that comes with his role to restate what he has said and done with the degree of authority expected from a man in his position. It is also very clear that Obert has failed to take account of the suggestions, hints and snide remarks made in the previous turns by the other members of the meeting. He appears to think he has done all that was required of him.

(*Turn 11*)

Martha: [And where is the booking sheet if I may ask?

Martha's retort can be interpreted in one of two ways. It can be viewed as an open challenge to Obert who, as noted below, falters (*well I I er*) before he suggests that he will circulate it again. The question *if I may ask* can also be viewed as an instance of reverse politeness as this does not suggest a geniune requestive intent but a persistence of the retort.

(*Turn 12*)

Obert: Well I I er will circulate it again and people are…

Disfluent formulations in meetings (*I I er*) can be interpreted to mean that the speaker was not comfortable with what he was saying. It could also indicate that the response was dispreferred. Obert is then interrupted and he loses the floor to Maina.

(*Turn 13*)

Maina: (F)   [I also have a concern regarding the time lines and general operations of this department. We requested new chairs a while ago and they still have not been delivered.*** Only this morning, he tells us that there are new chairs in the basement that were delivered last week. I find this unacceptable and…

In this turn, Obert is interrupted by Maina. This is significant in that this is one of the few occasions that women successfully interrupt a male on the floor as Maina raises a (*concern regarding time lines around delivery*). She introduces another instance, which can be viewed as further evidence of the slack in Obert's department (*only this morning he tells us there are new chairs that were delivered in the basement*). This is a rare example of a woman exercising her influence options and power overtly and does not minimise the open expression of lack of expertise on the part of a colleague which could be done to foster solidarity.

(*Turn 14*)

Matondo (F):   [May I suggest that we give Obert time to right the situation and perhaps after this meeting he can circulate clearer details regarding the move, the chairs and all that and hope we will have a better picture

Obert is saved from further attack and embarrassment by Miss Matondo's suggestion that they park the issue for the time being (*to give Obert time to right the situation…he can circulate details regarding the move*). She shifts alignment to present herself as the voice of reason as she suggests deferring the matter. Miss Matondo's suggestion is a face maintenance technique. As deputy chair, she plays out her role identity and professionalism and

(Fairclough (1989a:72) notes that it is usually those people in positions of power who ultimately decide what is appropriate in an interaction and who also have the power to determine to what extent power will overtly be expressed. What is of interest too is that the chairperson and his deputy collude to save Obert and this is not a gendered issue.

(*Turn 15*)

> Chair: Agreed gentlemen and ladies? Thanks for that Miss Matondo. Shall we move on to the next item on the agenda?

The chair coerces the meeting to move on (*agreed gentlemen and ladies).* Normally chairpersons address meetings starting with the ladies.

Step 5 and 6 Demonstration of how the four approaches were used in analysing and interpreting data

CA

Through the use of CA, I noted that the rules of one at a time conversation were observed in turns 1 to 10 and ignored in turns 11, 13 and 14 as the debate was getting heated. Men tended to own the floor initially. Women tended to speak towards the end of the meeting, and in this instance, the end of the topic. This could be cited as an example of male interactional dominance. The turn-taking pattern of the three women in the extract deserves comment. They attenuated their utterances to gain the floor through the use of modal verbs exemplified by the use of *if I may just add* … (Turn 8), *May I suggest ...* (Turn 14) as entry strategies where men's turn-taking strategies were more forceful, and this suggested an assumed right to a speaking turn. One could also comment on how turns are relinquished. In Turn 8, Martha relinquishes her turn through the use of the sociocentric filler *'you know'*, often used as the speaker on the floor draws towards the end of an argument and in Turn 10, Obert bows out with decreased amplitude (~~~) which is another way that a speaker on the floor can indicate that they are coming to the end of their turn but in this instance, the interruption that follows the decreased amplitude is in the form of a question asked in Turn 11. Turn 13 is a clear example of interruption following a disfluent formulation and Obert does not make an effort to compete for the floor and hold onto his turn. Obert has clearly not learnt ways of claiming his rights and power. Through fuller analysis of turn-taking and topic development, I also
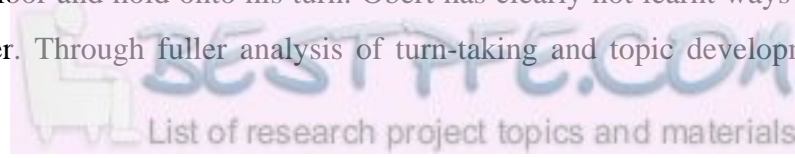
observed the construction of a no confidence vote for Obert, as members, one after the other, latched onto the ideas expressed by the former speaker: *but …* (Turn 3), *He did but* (Turn 4), *what we are saying …* (Turn 7), *if I may just add …* (Turn 8), *and where is …* (Turn 11), *I also …* (Turn 13), and built up evidence that certain issues had not been attended to. This could be interpreted as the 'politics of representation,' (Hak, 1999) which refers to how information or arguments are positioned by participants for projected effect as turn after turn, other members in the meeting suggest, what Obert should have done. In Turn 2, Derek's proposition (*what we need…*), taking '*we*' to refer to the rest of the participants in the meeting, suggests prior discussion of the issue and possibly in the 'back stage' domain as, in using the pronoun *we,* he is making an identity claim understood as referring to all other members. There is evidence of mutual knowledge (schemata) among the participating members. It is also important to note that Obert's right to the floor which should have been turn 2, as the chair had directed the discussion to his area, is violated. The floor is passed to him only after the explicit intervention of the chair who urges him to speak (*you need to speak for yourself…*). Turn taking violations of this nature represent face-threatening acts. This way, Obert's lack of professional identity and position power is actively produced by the co-interactants as they actively recruit evidence of his failure. They individually categorise him as someone about whom action needs to be taken.

Pragmatics

Application of pragmatics as a tool for analysis will show what the people using language are doing by examining utterance meaning beyond the literal sense. Additional points to mention and comment on would be politeness strategies and issues of face management and 'oppressive' and 'repressive' discourse where the men in the extract are observed using oppressive rather than repressive discourse (as explained in 3.6), which involves the open expression of top-down power as demonstrated in the comment by Derek (*…their communication must be more explicit and regular*). One could also comment on the form and function of dysfunctional formulations (*I I er*) which are often an indicator of discomfort (Turn 12), and the choice of words like *concerned, well and actually* as detensifiers often used by the less forceful speakers. Obert's attempt to defend himself (Turn 10) begins with two detensifiers (*well)* and (*actually).* Other linguistic features that one could comment on are the use of the first person plural *we* as a strategy of alignment, idea positioning and assumed common identity of the group. All in all, there are seven instances where speakers use the first

person plural pronoun *we.* The use of the first person plural *we* in such discourse means that no one takes full responsibility for the attack of a colleague, and in each turn, alleviates the speaker of the responsibility for expressing unpleasant propositions. All the interactants apart from Orbert are therefore included under the plural pronoun *we* to express the shared feelings of the group, and Obert's poor performance is viewed as having a negative impact on the community. In contrast, the use of the pronoun *I* enhances the visibility of the speaker's voice and is used less in advancing a proposition for fear of sounding individualistic, egocentric and impolite in a society that upholds collectivism. Turn 13 is interesting in that Maina, a woman, uncharacteristically expresses her feelings in very direct terms and is openly confrontational.

Another feature to comment on is the use of the pseudo-imperative *let's,* as either a commissive or mild directive. This is used for seeking cooperation and agreement from participants. In using this linguistic form in Turn 6, the chair avoids imposing his view by asking 'symbolically' such permission and the hearer has a 'symbolic' chance of answering negatively. In turn 1, the use of *let's* is used as a coercive device to get the meeting to move forward and can be contrasted with the use of *shall* in turn 15 which is used there as a marker of compulsion as the chair emphasises that the debate has been closed. Expressions of modality are also used to a large degree in this excerpt and for different purposes. In Turn 6, the chair uses *must* as a modality of obligation. In Turn 14, Matondo uses the word *perhaps* as an expression of probability and *can* as a modal showing the degree of possibility of execution of plan which is in this case, dependent on an understanding of institutional policies. In this instance, *can* is used as mitigation, to avoid overtly telling Obert that he must circulate clearer details concerning the move.

The double layering of hedges as in Turn 8 (*if I may*), reduces the amount of imposition by implying the tentativeness of the intended imposition. The metalingual request for permission to speak (*If I may just add to …*) indicates to an extent, what Dedaic (2004) calls human control over events as the speaker suggests to the listener, the detail he needs to bring (schemata) to the interaction in order to understand the full detail of the content shared. One can also comment on the coherence between speakers and across turns, through the use of connectives such as *If I may just add*, *now, and, also* which are in this case a strategy for building cumulative evidence against Obert (see section under CA above). One could also comment on the use of the word *guy* by the chair in Turns 1 and 6, as an expression of

camaraderie in trying to coax his team around this move which appears not to have been well received from the start. In Turn 4, Mark uses the same term as a show of team spirit.

Various other phenomena deserve comment. One comment could be around the use of a thematic equative expression *what we need* as a syntactic marker of emphasis used for constructing a subjective stance. Used at the opening of a sentence, the expression in Turn 2 denotes obviousness of proposition and in Turn 7 is used as an expression of affinity to the proposition made by others (*what we are saying*) and as a marker of solidarity and alignment of the speaker to both the content in the utterance and the feelings of the other members in the meeting. Additional comment could also be made around Turn 3 that begins with a marker of negation *but,* and the use of the verb of mental perception *though*t; to recount a historical opinion, which serves to reinforce the idea of non performance on the part of Obert. In Turn 5 Boni's use of the mental verb *guess* points to sarcasm. The four markers of emphasis (***we, MY***) in Turn 4 and (*MUST*) in Turn 7, and the two words that are dragged out for further emphasis (*a-c-t-u-a-l and e-v-e-r-y-o-n-e*) in Turn 4 serve to underscore the emotiveness of the topic. In Turn 11, Martha's question (*If I may ask?*), is an example of negative politeness. The use of *may* in this context as a metalingual adverbial, helps to avoid face threats and the real meaning and intention of the speaker is masked.

Turn 13 is relatively rich in components for commentary. Maina adds her concerns around the issue of the move. Speaking in the first person *I,* which suggests a high degree of responsibility for the proposition being made, she latches her turn, by the use of the connector *also* onto an idea expressed earlier on by a number of other participants. Her use of the determiner (*this*) in referring to Obert's department suggests prior discussion and general agreement outside of this meeting. The deitic use of *we* in the second line of the turn is in reference to the rest of her team and the listener must refer to local content to determine the identities subsumed under the collective pronoun beyond simple substitution. She is in this case calling for sympathy for her team that has been caught up in this mess. The pause (***), during which she looks around the room (field notes) is for intended effect, to allow the significance and implications of this debacle to sink. She resumes her speech with a marker of evidential force (*Only this morning*) which is itself, a dramatic communication of an assessment and value judgement concerning the described situation by making an appeal to evidence which emphasises the non desirability of the situation around the move. Reference to Obert as *h' l.*3, is rather contemptuous and further serves the purpose of distancing herself

from him as she gives a firsthand account of the poor service offered by the procurement department. Her last utterance (*I find this unacceptable*) before she is interrupted by the deputy chairperson, indicates a high degree of modal responsibility where the person projecting a claim prefaced by the first person pronoun *I,* explicitly signals themselves as the source of the opinion made in the utterance.

Turn 14 is also interesting in terms of aspects of modality. The elaborate construction of diverse compound hedges such as *may I suggest, perhaps we could, can we possibly*, which convey a degree of tentativeness in the suggestion, are used as mitigation markers to ensure that the relevant proposition is more easily accepted by the other participants. The use here, of metalingual mitigation markers is in keeping with the three rules of politeness which are 'formality', 'hesitancy' and 'equality' explained by Lakoff (1977:88). In the last line of the same turn, Matondo's reference to *all that* conveys either a degree of annoyance with Obert whom she now has to rescue or, fatigue around the topic.

 Further comments could be made here on the question tag (… *is that not so Obert?*) which can, in this case, connote a condescending attitude on the part of the chair and can also be viewed as an expression of sympathy (Leech's (1983) sympathy maxim (see.3.7). Awareness of what Duranti and Goodwin (1992) refer to as 'the behavioural environment of the workplace' would assist in achieving a more accurate interpretation, which in this instance could be an expression of support. Further to this, the utterance (*I have noted a marked improvement from the procurement team …*) could be viewed as an instance of further support for the procurement team. It could also be noted as an instance of both cynicism and irony by the chair as he expresses his observation of the team's recent performance. The utterance above by the chair is layered and opaque and can be open to a number of interpretations. Pragmatic principles can therefore be applied to unravel the different layers of meaning. The utterance by the chair can be viewed as an attempt to support Obert, who is evidently not performing, an invitation of a comment from Obert, or as being socially constitutive in that the utterance helps reshape the relationship between the individuals and the rest of the group.

The chair's closing remarks, as he brings this particular sequence to an end deserve comment. Normal practice in meetings is that ladies are referred to first before the gentlemen. In this instance, the chair chooses to mention the gentlemen first. Going by Grice's notion of conversational implicature, an interpretation could be that the chair senses more opposition to

the move as coming from the men and therefore wishes to make it explicitly clear that the debate is ended by prefacing his concluding remarks with an order which masquerades as a question (*Agreed gentlemen and ladies*). It is also possible that given the fewer numbers of women in attendance, the chair, oddly, starts with the gentlemen. This could also be interpreted as a show of gender bias and the secondary positioning of women even in senior management meetings.

CDA

By drawing upon the characteristics of critical discourse analysis and its concern for real instances of social interaction and context, it is possible to observe the role relationships and social identities of individuals and groups of people in this section of the meeting. The chair, owing to his position power, plays a role in ensuring that Obert does not suffer from the apparent prejudice that his colleagues have of him and is therefore not disregarded totally by them. Obert is evidently not performing to standard, seen by the way the meeting colludes against him, and might suffer continued loss of role identity as participants in the meeting offer disparaging remarks about the measures that his unit should have put in place. He has evidently failed to 'do power' and to fulfil the role expectations that others have of him, and might in the process be marginalised and excluded from mainstream activities and contestation of power. In this extract, power also plays out in very different ways. The chair and his deputy both exercise 'structural power' from their positions, especially between them as they open and close the sequence. They also use their position power to protect Obert in an arena where members are free to use their role status to expression their opinions but do not seemingly have the power to effect the changes they wish for. Obert is clearly powerless and is no match for the more aggressive management styles displayed by his college educated colleagues. It is also important to note that Obert was tabled to speak last in this meeting, perhaps in itself an indication of the degree of importance placed on his role or his known performance. Towards the end of the meeting, most attendees are listless and less critical issues are usually discussed last (order of listing observed in a number of meeting agendas).

As noted in the discussion above, the three theoretical approaches used in analysing the data cannot be used exclusively of one other. Interactional sociolinguistics, which provides the overarching framework for the analytic approaches followed, allows for a broad based study of social relationships which in this instance uses CA, pragmatics and CDA. A few of the

features of the three approaches noted in section 3.12, share many basic properties such as the intention of the speaker and the effect that the utterance has on the listener. The three approaches also all depend on factors such as the relevance of social and world knowledge, beliefs and presuppositions about the world upon which speakers and listeners rely when they communicate. It is therefore not possible in the analysis to avoid leakages and overlaps nor is it constraining in any way to use the tools side by side for analysis of discourse.

Ethnography

In my notebook, I noted that Obert, together with two of the younger women, was sitting in a row behind all the others sitting round the table. He did not get to give his report as Derek, Taurai and Mark took on the voice of the institution to recount and point out what was outstanding. As part of the post-recording briefing, it was confirmed that Obert was struggling with this portfolio for which he had no formal training or qualification and that he was not held in high esteem by his colleagues. This was observable in the data. It was also pointed out that of the younger managers in terms of experience, he had the lowest level of education, Form Six (Matric equivalent). This would explain why he was intimidated by the other participants in the meeting, as the kind of verbal and interaction behaviour displayed towards Obert as a colleague was not observed elsewhere. It was also pointed out that Obert was very religious and trustworthy, observations that would support his appointment to this senior role albeit the shortcomings displayed, in an economic environment where pilfering was a problem.

Overall, the excerpt above could be used to show elements of conversation management within meetings and how participants present themselves. The excerpt could also be used to show how both elements, that is conversation management and self-presentation, affect the way participants view each other. Obert fails to construct talk in a manner that would portray a positive image of him and make his power and authority in relation to others quite explicit.

Other issues that one could comment on if it was felt that these were important variables to the interaction, are the time the meeting was held, the chair, the number of people at this meeting, the gender ratios, Obert's age (38), being one of the older interactants, additional information on professional status and education level, the seating arrangement, the site itself and the observed culture of the institution.

4.4　Ethical issues

Research of this nature dictates that special consideration is given to research ethics. During the course of negotiating entry, the modalities of research and the practical details of data gathering were explained to the permission granting entities and co-researchers. Participating companies and individuals alike were, as requested by them, assured of anonymity. Companies after all wish to safeguard their existence by not allowing competition to get clear insight into their daily operations. The exact details of how the data would be gathered and interpreted were discussed explicitly and examples, drawn from the work of Holmes et al. (1999), showing how the transcribed data would be presented, was shown to the participants. An undertaking to show the companies the initial analysis of the data was also made. Assurances of strict confidentiality were given and undertakings that the companies involved would get the first opportunity to edit transcriptions were made. Individuals who had participated in the interviews were also availed the opportunity of first sight and reading of the initial analysis, if they wished. This, as Robson (1997) advises, was meant to ensure that the co-researchers, that is the men and women whose voices were taped and transcribed, were not misrepresented in any way, as findings were discussed, and through a process of reflexivity interpreted together with them so that the emerging conclusions and reporting discourses of the research were authenticated. The data presented herein was therefore extracted with full consent.

Working with co-researchers also raises a number of ethical concerns. The first is that working *with* informants and not *on* or *for,* involves the researcher in a reciprocal relationship with them. As Sarangi and Roberts (1999) point out, in much traditional research, the ratified audience for resultant outcomes is fellow academics and research boards. The objects of research are themselves, in Goffman's (1959) terms, at best bystanders, onlookers or those near enough to overhear. In real world research however, which is more integrated in outlook, the lived experiences of the researcher and the researched call for a process of reciprocity and exchange. Thus in this symbiotic relationship, the researcher and the researched may find themselves 'on to something': having joint insights, comparing perspectives, sharing new understandings, or deriving mutual benefit. The second concern, vis-à-vis working with the objects of study as co-researchers, is that integrated approaches to research also raise the issue

of how the researcher and the researched present themselves to each other. Allied to this is the concern of how to maintain professional credibility and authority on an unfamiliar research site, on the one hand, and finding a voice that is both relevant and understandable to those on the research site and beyond. The researcher had to be mindful of these factors at all times in the formulation of a coherent analytic environment and framework.

4.5   Limitations of the methodology

The methodology used for this research had a number of limitations. Firstly, the focus of data collection was limited to transcription of audio tapes, FGDs and in some cases, observation of instances and patterns of speech of women and men sitting on senior management boards at work sites in the service type industry, and did not therefore include talk and interaction perspectives from other types of industries.

As explained in 4.2, other traditional methods of data collection such as the use of the questionnaire and scientific experiment method were excluded by design as the nature of study called for the ethnographic approach which, as Chisaka (2000) points out, would allow the researcher to listen to the people who live the experience, and in particular instances, observe their actions and, during FGDs, participate in their activities, the very essence of qualitative research (Nherera, 1999; Borg and Gall, 1989).

The small numbers of women reflected in this data (29 women compared to 47 men) may also be viewed by some as a limitation to the study, despite the fact that qualitative research by its very nature does not rely on the size of the sample upon which to generalise research findings. This 'apparent' limitation is in fact a clear indication of the low figures of women in the higher echelons of the corporate world in Zimbabwean workplaces, and is therefore a reflection of the reality of Zimbabwe.

Another limitation experienced was that the demands of carrying out real world enquiry meant that the requirements for representative sampling were not easy to fulfil. As experienced in this research, the data was not easy to gather, as not all companies initially approached had women on their boards. In addition, most commercial entities in Zimbabwe, owing perhaps to the prevailing political and economic climate at the time of research, were

hesitant to allow access to an outsider to look into their boardrooms, the very hub of their operations. This was despite the fact that assurances of strict confidentiality had been given and initial access to editing of transcripts guaranteed. This noted exclusionary tendency could very well be due to the fact that most Zimbabwean workplaces are overly cautious and as a result are perhaps not very open to change in various other aspects. The issue of low numbers of women also serves to provide the context of behaviour which is pertinent to the analysis and explanation.

4. 6   Establishing validity and reliability

Owing to the types and nature of methodology in qualitative research, an element of subjectivity with all its associated problems is ever present. The greater volume of the data in this instance was captured verbatim through the use of a tape recorder, making the data so gathered authentic. The methods of analysis, abstraction and interpretation were derived from social constructionist theories which, in the main, explain that discourse analysis, as a form of social practice, can help in the interpretation of meaning from an utterance, based on the notion that what people say and how they say it is shaped by the framework in which they operate.

The validity of data in this study was further enhanced through the use of the strategies outlined below.

- **Thick description of data** (Geertz, 1973), which ensured that the workplace context was well explored and embedded within an ethnographic framework, thus combining wider contextual knowledge with linguistic and conversation analysis to illuminate the interpretive processes of interaction.

- **An emic perspective** (Denzin, 1988), which is an insider's view of what is happening. The emic perspective calls for, as above, a detailed thick description of the scene from where the data emerges and, in addition, invites the extensive use of quotations, in this case, the selected instances from the taped data. The citing of selected thick chunks of data, coding them under identified themes, discussing their form and function and relating them to a given context, is a way of enhancing the validity of research findings.

- **Triangulation** (Denzin, 1988), as a strategy in research, encourages the use of multiple methods to data collection; in this instance, use of an audio tape, ethnographic data collected via a number of channels including workplace observation, informal contacts with participants, pre- and post-recording briefings, contextual notes provided by the participants at the time of recording, and focus group discussions (FGDs), with subjects. It also refers to the comparison and bringing together of different perspectives.

- **Member checking** (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), a process which involved giving the companies and individual participants first opportunity to edit transcriptions, as well as to have sight and reading of the initial analysis and interpretation and comment on them if they wished. This process would bring in a measure of what Campbell and Stanley (1966) refer to as internal validity by making sure that the participants could recognise themselves in the data and this would demonstrate the plausibility of the methods used.

- **Prolonged engagement** (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), a process that meant keeping contact with data sites for close to six months after the recording event. There was need for checking and cross-checking of possible interpretations with participants. During each subsequent visit, I became more acquainted with the perspectives of the participants, as I could, over a period of time, observe and watch more keenly in the light of some emerging themes. Some of my original notions were also put to the test and the reviewed outcomes influenced my analysis of the data in one way or the other.

Efforts were also made to establish the reliability of emerging findings. Studies of conversation and discourse involve presuppositions, attitudes and behaviours which may not be fully explained based on the basis of empirical data alone, as the researcher cannot look into the mind of the speaker. Conversation analysts can however claim that transcripts of recorded data represent the studied phenomenon in as close to original form as possible. This, by implication, makes the data sources extracted from tape recordings authentic. With regard to the reliability of the data that was derived from the stenographer's representation of meetings, it could be argued that in the context of business meetings, value is attached to decisions recorded in the minutes, and that the text gathered and used from this site was still authentic. This argument by implication mitigates possible methodological problems that may

arise regarding the reliability of my findings and the research questions that legitimately can be asked. Moreover my data was broad-based as I taped a considerable number of successive meetings, totalling 63 hours, which I then reduced to 22 hours (see 4.2.3 for detailed discussion). A large database has definite advantages. Perakyla (1997:204-205) discusses how reliability can be enhanced by ensuring good technical recordings in order to come away with a thick transcription and description of data which should evidently support the claims made by the analyst. This thick data allowed me to generate hunches about what to look for as well as when identifying of emerging patterns and themes. I then reduced this data in a purposive way and also through researcher intuition in order to arrive at a representative sample which would allow for generalisation of findings across the four research sites. Besides, utterances in talk-in interaction and the descriptions of observable behaviours of women and men cannot be compared one-for-one. I then analysed in detail the portions selected.

I am cognisant of the fact that the consistency of my selection and its being truly representative may be questioned and may therefore impinge on the validity of the study. The alternative was not that I analyse the full corpus of 63 hours, which would not have been feasible but that rather the remainder of the hours of recorded material that was not transcribed be kept and detail, where relevant, be taken from it and used as corroborating information to support features discussed in the selected extracts. The nature of an exploratory study in any case affords the researcher licence 'to overcome self imposed restrictions' (Hak, 1999) and to try out new methods as one investigates a presumption that one has in a relatively new research site, such as the changing face of the workplace in an emerging and transforming African economy. As Hak (1999:446) argues, interpretative researchers are concerned with the search for experiences that could be explored in depth to achieve a qualitative analysis that cannot altogether be derived from a top-down approach where the researcher's interests are allowed to drive the process.

My presence at some of the recording sites would also alleviate a recurrent methodological problem with ethnography as a data gathering tool. I would argue that ethnographic notes made alongside the recordings can and did act as supplementary and corroborating data and evidence to conversation and discourse analysis, as I had first-hand opportunities to examine work practices holistically. Hak (1999:445) argues that there has been, in recent years, an over-politicisation and an over-emphasis of conflict in the representation of relations between workers in conversation, due to the over-reliance on data collected in meetings rather than on

the actual observation of actual work practices. One of my aims in using a number of data collection methods simultaneously was to avoid such possible criticism.

The fact that the research was limited to four companies only, should not detract from the reliability and validity of the findings. Qualitative research, by its very nature, does not rely on the size of the sample upon which to generalise research findings. Rather, as Van Maanen (1988:3) notes, the strength of findings rests with the understanding derived first-hand, '…of the environment, problems, background, language, rituals and social relations of a more-or-less bounded and specified group of people' whose typicality was self-evident. The guiding concern was therefore to come away with clearly recognisable patterns of interactional dynamics that would reflect practice at a particular period in time and within identifiable organisational structures in companies in Zimbabwe.

The relatively low numbers of women compared to those of men represented in the data should not detract from the reliability of the findings. There are many other voices of women from other institutions and backgrounds whose opinions, comments, insights and experiences were taped or noted during the preliminary interviews, and whose contributions have not been mentioned directly but used in part as commentary.

The discussion and justification above, therefore allows one to claim the reliability of the research. The considerations for validity and reliability outlined above also resulted in the focal point of this study becoming sharper.

4.7   Summary

The chapter set out to describe and explain the methodology selected for the research. The intention was primarily to examine the critical methodological features that could be used to examine the factors at play in a corporate boardroom made up of females and males, and to explore the nature and offer an explanation of the different interactional mechanisms at play, by using a framework that derived its main impetus from CA, pragmatics and CDA.

 To this end, the chapter gave a description and justification of the data collection procedures adopted for the research. The suitability of the case study method for research of the

workplace was discussed and the use of FGDs and ethnography as data collection methods justified. The chapter also included discussion of the sampling techniques used in order to obtain data that was representative. Data analysis and interpretation as concepts in research were discussed in detail and the steps followed in the process outlined. The chapter then looked at the explanatory framework used in analysing and interpreting the findings. This was followed by a demonstration of how the analysis and interpretation of data was conducted as a prelude to Chapter 5. The chapter then gave a brief explanation of how ethical issues related to this type of research were handled, together with the questions that might be raised as methodological limitations. The chapter ended with a discussion of how the research ensured the validity and reliability of the research methodology used.

CHAPTER 5:

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.0   Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data collected for this research and in so doing seeks to provide answers to the core questions raised in this study namely:

i)   How do men and women manage conversation in management meetings? (More specifically, how do those in managerial positions use discourse strategies to negotiate   speaking turns, control topics of discussion and monitor talk in meetings?)

ii)   How do men and women present themselves in management meetings? (More specifically how do interactants, through the way they use language, construct and manage professional identities and maintain their role status and relationships in meetings?)

The chapter begins with an overview of the meetings attended. This is followed by a brief introduction to the analysis. The analysis itself has been divided into two macroareas emerging from the data, namely conversation management and self-presentation strategies in meetings. The chapter also offers a discussion of the themes and patterns of the discursive strategies observed and attempts to offer an explanation of the findings based largely on gender-role socialisation theories, interpretations from the FGDs and discussions on the correlation between talk and power. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research findings and broader explanations for the tendencies noted.

The chapter focuses on presenting and analysing selected representative excerpts that reflect the emerging and recurrent themes identified from the transcribed data of the meetings recorded (see discussion under 4.2.3). This will be done in order to show how both men and women use various interactional mechanisms in management meetings, with the view to

understanding their importance in the performance of various functions within management practice at the workplace. The data is analysed from the observer-participant (as in FDGs) perspective, based largely on interactional sociolinguistics, the theory underpinning this research, which should help shed light on 'what is going on here' (Cicourel, 1992) in senior management meetings. The narrated and described experiences from the individual interviews and FGDs, together with a wide range of socio-cultural presuppositions and ethnographic data will serve as an important explanatory and discussion framework for the linguistic behaviour emerging from the data.

5.1   Overview of the meetings recorded and observed

The meetings observed and analysed in this chapter derive from situations where participant statuses are institutionally defined. The meetings were characterised by the sharing of information and collective problem solving in which alternative perspectives on issues were weighed and evaluated. These were also occasions for joint construction of business strategies, typically via discussion. It was found that in the course of the meetings that form the corpus of this study, participant members discussed 'tabled issues' extensively and did so collaboratively. Participants reworked several written or oral drafts of a tabled item, sometimes laying out first a given position, then outlining what happened, what could have happened and what could still be done, as members from the different divisions and areas of operation tried to arrive at some commonly constituted view. At one time or another, each member present participated in the discussion that had been initiated by some other member of the group. Other members present did not merely listen. They asked questions, made business projections, sought verification or supplied information critical to the understanding and interpreting of the significance of the issues under consideration, resulting in an impressive complexity of exchange of ideas, (re)alignment of some, repositioning of others and even the withdrawal of a few.

What was observed in these meetings was both an overt and covert display of power 'played out' through skilled turn-taking strategies employed to negotiate and discuss items arising from a set agenda, which items concerned all members present albeit to different extents. These meetings also served as sites for getting the formal work of collaboration between professionals accomplished. Of particular interest was the observation that such meetings

could operate as an open arena where 'daggers are drawn and members proceed to decapitate each other' (participant in FGD), as discussions, by their nature, can easily turn into judgemental reckonings of a member's actions and decisions. Such discussions create a discursive world in which co-participants can be vulnerable to the points of view and reactions of those sitting around the boardroom table.

Part of what it means to be a ratified participant in these meetings is the expectation and acceptance that co-interactants will, at different opportune times; insert themselves into the discussion at hand, regardless of who initiates it, as membership entitles them to these discussion privileges. It was observed further that, while any member may raise a concern or ask a question, there are nonetheless issues of parity, concerning the extent to which each one of them self-censors or the extent to which their actions, thoughts and feelings are stated; and the degree to which they can be problematised, bearing in mind that as with all other social activities, discussions involve a number of participant roles.

It was also observed that each meeting has its own dynamics, ranging from friendly, easy flowing and productive, to tense or problematic, and all variously yielding their own multiple outcomes - positive or otherwise. It was also evident that, when members of a group interact together in meetings over a period of time, as do the interdisciplinary professional teams recorded in this study, they recognise that they share a local history of past events, decisions and common understanding. In a similar way, face-to-face interactions create a microclimate within each meeting, which can affect the positioning of individuals in the group *vis-à-vis* each other. With time, members develop local identities based on their reputations within the group or the local workplace, which have an existence independent of formal group status. All participants recorded in this corpus actively engaged in this complex social, political, linguistic and cognitive activity, albeit some more than others.

5.2   Introduction to the analysis

The aim in this section as discussed in the introduction to the chapter, is to conduct a close analysis of the sequential talk-in-interaction of both women and men as primary data and to examine how participants, through use of various discourse strategies, express their ideas and

opinions and how these are interpreted by the addressees in the encounters recorded on audiotape.

People interacting, in this instance in meetings, respond above all to the meanings that are expressed, the ways in which those meanings are articulated and as they understand them. Organisational meetings take place in a context where background knowledge is likely to be shared (schemata) and speakers can be confident that others will understand their indirect allusions. I am proposing to regard language use as a form of social practice used to construe particular meaning through both form and function. In this regard, I further propose in my analysis, to follow Thompson's (1996:7) view of meaning as being 'the sum of what the speaker wants the hearer to understand', in other words, taking the meaning of an utterance and equating it with its function in a given context, which context is a relevant factor influencing language choices. By formulating an approach to linguistic description which entails examining choices amongst relevant options in context, as well as studying instances of language in use viewed as verbal performance (Thompson, 1996), it should be possible to interpret why a particular speaker is expressing *this* particular meaning in *this* particular way at *this* particular point. The exploration of interactional strategies used by women and men should provide therefore a particularly sensitive test for understanding and documenting the 'what' and 'how' of the interactional practices of men and women in management meetings. Frost's (1987:507) argument cited earlier (see 4.3 4) that communication per se 'provides the means through which power and influence can be exercised, developed, maintained and enhanced' becomes relevant to the analysis.

Given the topic and nature of the research, it was necessary (as pointed out in 4.2.3) to be selective and systematic in the selection of the data for close analysis and the presentation of the results of the analysis. I begin by discussing briefly the category under study, for example 'topic control', and highlight its critical features. I then give a short descriptive account of the nature of the meeting(s) where necessary, from which the excerpt is drawn. This is followed by a selected excerpt chosen for its typicality, which I refer to in discussing my observations. In the discussions, I note some general patterns I observed as coming out of the bounded encounter, with a particular focus on how the men and women in my sample used certain discourse strategies to present their ideas and how the addressees typically responded. The origin of each excerpt is coded by site and sequence of recording. For easy reference, the

excerpts are numbered across the two macroareas discussed in this chapter, namely conversation management and self-presentation.

Adopting an emic perspective, I use available theory to view the data at hand. I also follow the inductive method of developing theory suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who point out that using the method demands that the researcher make theoretical sense out of the vast amount of data, 'to bring out underlying uniformities and diversities, and to use more abstract concepts to account for differences in the data' (1967:114). In addition, I follow Bogden and Biklen's (1982) advice in deciding which evidence (excerpts) to use to illustrate points raised so that the abstract ideas are grounded in the evidence available. I also use examples and quotations from the data so that the interpretation is grounded in illustrated documentation to substantiate the assertions made. I do this in order to strengthen the plausibility of the statements made. In this regard, Patton (1990) concurs with both Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Bogden and Bicklen (1982) about sufficient description and direct quotations and placement of excerpts being included to allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report, and all serving to clarify the points which the researcher is presenting in such a way that others who might want to know about similar issues can identify them from the text. Theory should emerge and be seen to emerge from the data at hand.

Efforts have been made not to group women together and consider them as a homogenous group, thus avoiding tendencies not uncommon in language and gender research: nor is this an attempt to interpret a participants' behaviour, personality and so on in terms of commonsense attributes which are applied to whole groups. I have tried to pay attention to the differences between them to see if the many variables present influence results. Efforts have also been made not to overgeneralise the patterns found elsewhere. By looking at the variables of age, status, position held and type of meeting, more specific findings emerged that defy the ultra stereotypical perspective. This chapter will therefore try to offer a critical appraisal of how women in particular are conducting themselves in top level management meetings by analysing the different linguistic variables in use as they interact with their male counterparts. This view of analysis allows sociolinguists to qualify their data and make correlations between linguistic and social structures.

As discussed above in 4.2.3, the data gathered were combined and treated as one set, as the research is basically noting tendencies. Because most of the meetings were considerably lengthy, given the nature of and level at which the meetings were held, in presenting data for analysis, only the relevant sections considered as constituting situational context are presented here.

Two macroareas typically representing participants' verbal performance emerged from the data. I categorised these as conversation management and self-presentation, (see 1.5). The main analytical frameworks drawn on are CA and pragmatics while CDA, as explained in 3.8, is used as an explanatory tool to interpret the relationship of utterances to the social structure that frames them. More specifically, CDA, as explained by Van Dijk (1989a), sets out to explain power relevant discourses through an examination of the social and cognitive processes of their production. Where pertinent, the discussion and explanation was, as indicated above, supported with excerpts or reference to a relevant point made, or insights drawn from the FGDs.

I chose to focus on aspects of conversation management and self-presentation for two reasons. Firstly, they have been identified by other scholars referred to in 1.5 as prominent characteristics that feature in meetings, conferences, seminars and other areas where interaction is confined to, and guided by a pre-set agenda. Secondly, through an analysis of these two macroareas, it should be possible to see where there are differences between how men and women speak and also to be able to assess the importance of the differences, if any, in the way that language can be controlled and manipulated for calculated effect. The selection of categories was therefore not arbitrary.

The analysis below focuses therefore on how men and women in managerial positions, placed as they are on different hierarchical levels, negotiate professional, role status and power relations in meetings by means of the discourse strategies they use. In carrying out the analysis that follows, I draw on the conceptualisations outlined above in discussing the ways in which both women and men conduct themselves as one aspect of creating a professional identity and advantage, and how they enact their knowledge and expertise and present the same. The excerpts I discuss here, as explained in 4.2.3, have been chosen for their potentially rewarding content, to indicate the range of both direct and indirect discourse strategies which individuals used in meetings and the complex and diverse ways in which

particular linguistic devices were used. In the discussions of the excerpts that follow, I examine and discuss the discourse strategies noted in management meetings, bearing in mind Hymes' (1977:168) contention that 'sex differences in speech are not evident in every word'; that each verbal exchange yields its own immediate or potential meaning whose interpretation hinges on context.

Each of the excerpts below are arguably complex and contain items which could be used to demonstrate more than one discourse strategy used by women or men in the different contexts to say what they say, but each has been selected specifically for the language features that clearly illustrate the case I wish to demonstrate. In working through the various excerpts, occasional overlaps and leakages between the interactional mechanisms discussed could not be avoided altogether. There was also, in places overlap between the macroareas where some features could arguably fall under both and where this happened, I made mention of it and cross referenced the findings.

Where subjects of research did not express their objection, their words and utterances are referred to them by name and where permission was not granted, the subjects will be referred to simply as F (female) and M (male) with numbering where applicable. In addition, in some instances I deliberately use the coding of F for female and M for male, where it is my aim to demonstrate an argument more clearly.

In my discussion of findings under the two macroareas of conversation management and self-presentation, the terms *member, participant, speaker, interlocutor, interactant and addressee/addressor* are used to describe the person(s) on the floor as they play different participant roles and, to refer specifically to those roles as necessitated by context and for intended meaning and interpretation.

5.3   Conversation management in meetings

In this section, I describe the means and tools used by interactants in the management of ongoing discussion. I begin by discussing strategies used in conversation management (as defined in 1.5 and 3.2) by analysing how talk itself is organised and the way in which participants in meetings manage conversation as they take turns and position themselves in
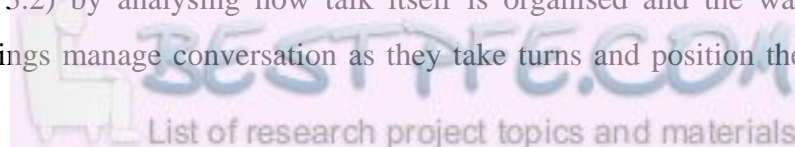
ongoing debate. I also look at how they work out the speaking rights and privileges of the other to produce a collaborative and well-managed conversation structure.

An important feature of conversation in any context is the local management of talk. As Graddol and Swan (1989) point out, conversation management - how frequently and at what point anyone enters the floor or picks up a turn to one's advantage - clearly depends on a number of factors. Personality and emotional state are important, as are many other aspects of the speaker's social identity, such as whether they have higher or lower status than their interlocutor, their level of expertise, the situational context, their role or their gender.

The issue of conversation management, which is primarily an investigation into that interactional structure sometimes known as 'floor,' should yield interesting results related to the topic of language and gender. CA, which is primarily an analysis of 'turn' and 'floor,' is distinguished on the basis of technical definitions and participant engagement, which notions are eloquently elaborated in Edelsky (1981). These have been outlined in 3.2 above. The 'turn' in this study is used to refer to the more apparent and technical one-at-a-time character of conversation initially cited in the work of Goffman, (1971) and later Sacks et al (1974). I however, extend the definition of 'turn' to include what Edelsky (1981:397) refers to as turn in the 'participant's view or supposed intention and bounded by the turn claiming responses of the other'. 'Floor' is used to refer to control over conversation when one's turn is ratified (Philips, 1976) by the members of the meeting through various means such as being listened to, or having control over part of the conversation, leading to the more collaborative venture where two or more people develop meaning through the co-construction of an idea by operating on the 'same wavelength' (Edelsky, 1981) but not necessarily agreeing.

Ordinarily, interlocutors coordinate their talk so that one participant is talking at a time and speaking turns succeed one another relatively smoothly, an achievement requiring considerable skill. The gap between two speaking turns is often a fraction of a second and for effective turn-taking to take place; certain rules have to be observed. Sacks et al (1974) argue that one model of turn taking includes 'transition relevant places' explained in 3.2 These are points where an utterance may be considered as complete and at which it might be reasonable for a turn to end and for another speaker to either take a turn or enter the floor. The 'transition relevant places' may be made more explicit through use of additional cues such as speaker's gaze, tapering of the voice and gesture. Entering the floor at other than transition relevant

places has particular significance, such as: signalling annoyance, an expression of urgency, enthusiasm, a desire to correct or eagerness to complete what is being said. The immediacy and relevance of a topic also has a bearing on the pattern of turn-taking that may emerge and which in turn has an effect on the flow of conversation and its management. In the analysis that follows, I tried to determine at what point and for what reason speakers in meetings claimed the floor, interrupted one another and what patterns emerged.

For purposes of analysis I tended to focus mostly on discourse where the one-at-a-time turn management rule was met, but this was not always the case. The one–turn-at-a-time rule is central to the culture of western style business meetings. This structure is however not a conversation universal, nor is it critical for the communication of ideas and messages. Speech communities in South Asia (Jupp, Roberts and Cook-Gumperz, 1982), and also in my experience in the speech community studied here, naturally occurring simultaneous talk is normal, frequent and is often processed as part of the 'floor.'

The claims made in the analysis and discussion of the extracts below are, in some instances, supported by frequency counts. Singly produced 'floors,' where a speaker makes an utterance to which no one responds, and the very small number of uncategorised linguistic features have been eliminated from further discussion.

The categories applied to the description of conversation management emerged partly from my intensive engagement with the data and partly from my reading of the works of Edelsky (1981), Fairclough (1992, 1993), Fishman, (1978a, 1978b), Sacks et al (1974) and Zimmerman and West (1995). This approach to the selection of headings is recommended by Schegloff (1999), who argues that it helps analysts address themselves to the range of linguistic resources and practices from and by which persons co-construct interaction.

5.3.1 The role of the chair and organisation of meetings

The success of a meeting hinges on the management of the event. Because management meetings are by their nature powerful discursive events where professional expertise and differences are channelled through organisational means, good chairmanship skills are critical as they help dismantle barriers to involvement while bringing participants together. These

skills are often reflected both in the distribution of the speech acts expressed and in the specific strategies and linguistic forms used to realise them. As Holmes et al. (1999) argue, one obvious means by which people in authority construct their professional identity is by making their authority in relation to others in the workplace quite explicit. As an example of how talk can be controlled and managed through organisational means, the chairpersons of all meetings attended and recorded opened the meetings in very much the same way. Both male and female chairpersons set the parameters of the meetings chaired by going through the formalities, outlining the important issues, deciding what was to be tabled and generally setting the tone and tempo of the meeting, to which the attendees responded accordingly. In appendix A both the MD and the consultant explicitly *mark some boundaries for the day* (*ll. 11 to 15*). The chairpersons in most of the meetings observed and recorded were, through the institutional powers vested on them, able to control the flow of the meeting by deciding who was to speak, who to pass a turn to, when to introduce a new topic or conclude the one preceding it. Chairpersons also had to act against a number of barriers to effective meetings which included domination by a single member, imbalance in the ratio of negative to positive comments made, informal chatter, disruptions and open hostility amongst others. The following brief excerpts drawn from different meetings demonstrate how chairmanship skills were used to maximise participant involvement and control the flow of the debate as a form of conversation management. There were many other variations of the same uttered by both male and female chairpersons.

Excerpt 1a demonstrates how the chair decided who was to speak
1.   Chair(M)   Ok everybody, can we all be quiet and give Leonie a chance to
2.   say something

Excerpt 1b demonstrates how the chair introduced a new topic
1.   Chair(F)   At this point I would like to suggest that we move on to the
2.   issue of equities.

Excerpt 1c demonstrates how the chair avoided domination by a single speaker and forced the floor holder to make his point and allow for more open debate
1.   Chair(F)   Can you try to summarise your main point please?

Excerpt 1d demonstrates how the chair ensured that all points were considered and discussed and that none of the members were marginalised
1.   Roderick: This is rubbish. I'd expect a marketing person to give us the exact
2.   figures
3.   Chair(M)   I propose that we avoid labelling each others' ideas and instead
                   identify how they might or might not be helpful

Chairpersons were also observed allowing attendees to negotiate turn taking opportunities. The meeting presented in Appendix A is a typical example of a free flowing meeting where participants negotiated their own entry onto the floor. The following sub-section is a discussion of how both men and women employed entry strategies as they competed for a turn.

5.3.2 Entry strategies as expression of intent

Conversation management is often characterised by the extensive use of linguistic markers used as devices for expressing intent at the start of a turn. CA as a field of study sets out to discover what order there might be in talk-in-interaction and how the same is negotiated and constructed between participants, enabling them in the process, to orient to what is happening and consequently make sense of the interaction. CA also allows the analyst to observe and trace how discourse conventions are constructed and negotiated between participants and the structure itself enables participants to interpret each other's motives and intentions as they negotiate entry into conversation. As the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) studies have shown (see 3.1), participants in an interaction need to be able to identify what type of discourse they are involved in and predict how it will typically be structured for them to be able to position themselves relative to each other as they take note of the conversation mechanisms that form part of the rules of engagement. These in turn, help to produce both the order and meaning of an interaction.

Grice (1975) explains that speakers can project their plans across chunks of discourse and determine how to package the information and that interactants can then use these contextual presuppositions to recognise this intention. This can be done by means of speech acts such as expressives with actional components. These features of discourse contribute to participants' interpretation of each others' motives and intent as they effectively move towards maintaining conversation involvement. Furthermore, in some cases, these features are designed to be transparent to hearers while in other cases, at least parts of them are designed to be opaque. In the interactions observed, these features were used as entry strategies enacted through certain surface features of talk clearly recognisable for their function. Participants in the meetings for example, asserted their authority by the way they explicitly directed the course of the discussion or events as a way of showing not only involvement, but also the

extent to which they could influence proceedings. Apart from the chairpersons, speakers in higher status positions such as the chartered accountants were noted for instance, explicitly changing the focus of the discussion by saying, *I want us to now turn to the issue of …*, summarising decisions*, (If I may just sum up …)*, making requests such as *Can we now conclude...* or deciding when to end a particular encounter (*let's now turn to the issue of …*) among others. From the data, it was noted that men more than women, and chairpersons, more than anyone else used these expressives with actional components as entry strategies, as a way of directing and controlling the flow of meetings. Examples of how men used these entry strategies included utterances such as *Now I am going to add to that ...* as an entry marker, *Let me explain …*, *Let me rephrase …*, *Let me answer you …,* as a means to topic control, where they assumed permission to enter the floor. Strategies used as a means of topic control will be discussed in more detail in 5.3.5. As noted by Lakoff 1973; 1975), use of entry markers by women typically took the form of attenuated permission seeking moves such as … *May I speak please?*, *Can I respond to the organogram issue?*, *I think if I make myself clear*, *Can I also intervene?,* a type of language that avoids direct and forceful statements and relies on forms that convey hesitation and uncertainty. Where men were noted using unmodified, explicit and bold interactional strategies to enter the floor and affect the course of meetings, women, who were in no way, in terms of status, subordinate to men, and operating under similar circumstances, opted to avoid such forms. Perhaps a plausible explanation for this, and one mentioned by other researchers (Coates, 1986; Tannen, 1990) might be that women are allegedly overly polite and co-operative interlocutors who express frequent concern for other participants in talk by being indirect. Another possible explanation for the way women use attenuated speech as entry strategies with its connotations of powerlessness on the part of the speaker appears to be that it is suitable for protecting the face needs of a relatively powerless speaker, what Leech (1983) refers to as the tact maxim, without attacking that of the addressee.

Another similar strategy used as a conversation entry mechanism is the use of pre-sequencing moves as both men and women put forward their ideas in meetings. Pre-sequencing moves, which are an important aspect of CA (Cook, 1990), have particular relevance *vis a vis* how an idea is presented, positioned and linked in the structuring of conversation, which often determines its fate (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 2003). As part of professional discourse, interactants at managerial level often make it clear at the beginning, as an entering condition at the outset of interaction as discussed in 3.1, what they expect to cover in their talk and in

what order. This is one strategy for claiming ownership of the idea and for asserting control of both the floor and the meeting. In the excerpts that follow, I show and contrast how women and men enter an interaction and whether they preface their proposed contribution or not and comment on the possible consequence of each. Excerpts (2i-ii) taken from different meetings, demonstrate how men pre-sequence their contributions. Excerpts (2iii-iv) show how the younger women in the data fail to pre-sequence their contributions and excerpt (2v) in contrast shows an older woman take on the discourse strategy often used by men.

Excerpt 2 (i): (ODT Insurance Co: Day 8)
1.   Patrick: Ughm thank you Mr Chairman. I will start off with Bulawayo.
2.   We are right on schedule on our data capturing. Should be
3.   through by the 28th of February.

Excerpt 2 (ii)
1.   John: Thank you Mr Chairman, our topic is development. First I will
2.   touch on the staff update

Excerpt 2 (iii)
1.   Thabani (F): In March we will be opening two branches, one in Gweru on
2.   the 19th and on the 26th we will be going to Mutare

Excerpt 2 (iv)
1.   Tracy: (F):   Mr Chairman I think we, on the issue of staff leaving the
2.   company, I would like to say I think its mostly greener
3.   pastures. Certainly for Amina I know its greener pastures.

Excerpt 2 (v)
1.   Nyadzayo (F): Thank you Mr Chairman as you have seen from my report, I am
2.   I think collecting quite a lot of money as compared to my first
3.   effort January.

The pre-sequencing acts are all extracted from the same audit-type meetings where professionals in their different areas of expertise seek to demonstrate the efficiency of, and progress made in their units, by asserting control over the information they seek to impart. It is clear that the men, by using institutional language to refer to technical interest and abstract rules, seek in their entry into their separate reports, to categorise information into recognisable and auditable events. Patrick clearly marks the beginning of his report (*I will start off...*) and indicates its sequential nature while John demarcates the parameter of his *topic* (as) *development* and like Patrick before him, organises the delivery of the report (*First I will*) … By clearly pre-sequencing their reports, the two men have coded the information into categories that facilitate and depict efficient problem solving. Use of institutionally

appropriate choice of language frame and lexical choice is more likely to result in contributions sounding more authentic.

The women cited here, with the exception of the one referred to last and who is older than the others, fail to recontextualise information as institutional knowledge and speak of work related issues using a more personal mode of talk which is in this case inappropriate. Thabani the public relations manager of the company does not preface her report and simply plunges in with details of forthcoming events (*In March we will be opening two branches*...). Thabani's entry strategy is dissonant with the form of the meeting. This could be explained as a common characteristic of interpersonal communication where the speakers are guided and influenced in what they say by knowledge of their relational partner (see 2.8). Similarly, Tracy shares her belief that the reason why most young people have left is *…mostly (for) greener pastures. Certainly for Amina I know its greener pastures*. The status of the knowledge and information, which Tracy passes on, is clearly not professional or institutional as, based on ethnographic information gathered, no exit interview was conducted with Amina.

Patrick and John on the other hand, clearly indicate their concern for their professional identity by use of the first person singular pronoun '*I*' to show that they hold the floor and that the ideas they contribute originate from them or their office over which they have evident control. Thabani also in contrast to the men begins her report in a low voice (field notes) and ascribes the contribution to the whole department through use of the first person plural '*we*'. Failure to use her voice in making her contribution and thus positioning herself positively with regard to her contribution, and the use of life world expressions in business meetings renders contributions less powerful, less professional and less authentic.

Recognition of an authority comes through not only by display of certain specialised knowledge, but also through 'power relevant discourse' for credibility. To be an effective manager, one must speak like a manager. Possibly, it is because of her powerless discourse that Thabani loses the floor to the MD who takes over her presentation. This will be discussed in another context in 5.4.4. In the case of Nyadzayo, her pre-sequence utterance prepares the ground for the kind of turn she is going to take. Her mode of operation is strictly institutional, tying her presentation to the report already presented. This seems to suit the projected ethos of the company. Nyadzayo is, perhaps given her age and experience in the insurance industry

(20 years), a typical example of how women, as indeed any other individual, become gradually socialised into 'power talk,' a case of how professionals working within bounded and situated encounters are gradually socialised into the discourses of the profession and that of the 'other'.

Other typical pre-sequencing acts and examples noted elsewhere in the transcribed data but mainly at the bank site, and drawn from similar institutionally controlled meetings are: for pre sequences; *If I may explain further...* (F 8 times) *before I conclude...* (F 4 times); and as examples of nonconformity *If I may disagree with you...* (M 16) *what I want to say is let's be critical of each other...* (M 3 times), *I wish to point out that I do not necessarily agree…* (M 4 times).

5.3.3   Self-selection and selection by others as turn management

The frequency with which participants self-selected or were selected by colleagues to take a turn also emerged as an important marker of how men and women project themselves in their bid to take a turn and manage conversation in meetings. The different perspectives of CA permit various rules of interaction to exist and for those rules to be situationally invoked standards which, according to Pomerants and Fehr (2000) cited in Chapter 3 above, are part of the activity they seek to explain. Men and women had different strategies of organising the interaction in ways that allowed them to enter or dominate the floor. What was clear was that those in 'boss' positions like the chair, the consultant or the accountants were never selected by others but self selected themselves to take a turn. Once on the floor, the same were, in the case of the chair, never interrupted and with the last two, interruption was by way of seeking clarification. Self-selection on the part of women was done mostly through use of politeness strategies and defined formality where forms like *can I just explain…*, *if I may just say...*, *can I say something…*, *Can I please say something...* were used. The significance and meaning of these politeness strategies will be discussed later (see 5.4.7). Men on the other hand tended to push their way onto the floor and claimed speaking rights. Appendix A has an example of a more junior man observed pushing his way onto the floor by responding strongly to the point made by the speaker before him (the consultant who is a woman) as he claims vehemently that *no it's the same l.* 70.

It was also observed and confirmed in the FGDs that men also tended to select other males and often chose to pass a turn to a male colleague by explicit means. These involved selecting the next speaker by name as shown below.

Excerpt 3: (WES Co: Day 4)
1.	George:	I have actually said that, that is how we ought to go. We can't
2.		sit around and hope that things will just happen of their own
3.		accord. In my view, we need to bring in a consultant and we
4.		should get things from a different perspective - What's your
5.		take on this Jim?

Men were also noted directing the proposition or question towards the selected speaker through use of explicit formulations such as asking for detail from a selected colleague (*Have you got the figures here James?*) or (*Perhaps Paul you would like to come in at this point and elaborate a little?*). Men were also noted (field notes) turning towards the selected speaker, a subtle way of passing on the floor to the subject of the gaze. In their study of interaction in group work in classrooms, Swann and Graddol (1988) commented that gaze was an important interactional mechanism that was crucial in obtaining (or not obtaining) speaking rights. In this study, the tendency by men to pass on speaking rights to male colleagues was confirmed by a female FDG respondent (Maina) who commented:

> *It can be quite fascinating to watch. Its like a soccer game where some team members keep passing the ball to certain players and it is easy to find oneself on the outside of things.*

This way, men could give each other speaking rights to the exclusion of women, an understated way of discriminating against the 'other' and denying them space on the ideas market where power is played out and influence gained or lost. It is however important to point out that selection of a male speaker by another speaker was not an arbitrary exercise. Speaking rights were passed on to the more powerful or influential participants whose opinions were apparently respected. This observation would seem to suggest that powerful parties dominate conversation not only because of their own efforts, but also because of the support they receive from others.

5.3.4 Interruptions as a floor management technique

In the conversations observed and taped, it was noted that speakers interrupted one another frequently as part of ongoing conversation and local management of talk. In defining interruption, Zimmerman and West (1975) emphasise its characteristic feature as the infringement of a current speaker's turn. Several pieces of research carried out since Sacks et al's (1974) classic study of conversation argue however, though variously, that interruptions as well as overlaps are essentially symbols of conversation dominance, competition, status, power, expertise and take-over bids. Zimmerman and West (1975) have argued further that interruptions are not randomly distributed in any interaction and that they are perpetrated more often by certain types of speaker than others (adults more than children; men more than women.)

In my analysis of the data, I adopted the definition of Sacks et al. (1974) of interruption to mean speech perpetrated before the word immediately preceding a 'transition relevant place,' and overlap to refer to one speaker talking over another over a stretch of talk in an effort to override the speaker on the floor by attempting to close down his or her line of argument and giving up when this fails. In both instances, the judgement is made at the point when the first speaker stops speaking, not where the second speaker starts. Interruptions it appeared were both a recognised social convention and an integral part of talk-in-interaction as interactants sought, through various discourse exchanges, to process meaning. In the sample data that follows, I focus on the manner in which participants both men and women acquire turns, own the floor and interrupt one another in meetings. In my analysis, turns, the floor and interruptions were interpreted in the immediate and situational context to determine the exact nature and function of this important conversation feature. The discussion of findings below demonstrates how men and women use turn-taking and floor management techniques in ways largely related to their gender.

Firstly, it could be argued that men interrupted the speech of others successfully and more frequently than did women, thereby exerting greater influence in the use of floor management techniques.

The example below, drawn from a strategy planning meeting is a demonstration of how men were able to interrupt others male or female.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Excerpt 4a: (Safari Co: Day 3)</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.</td><td>Fiona:</td><td>The issue we should be looking at closely is one of current</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.</td><td></td><td>existing markets and what we might call potential markets</td></tr>
<tr><td>3.</td><td></td><td>where ever these emerging markets may be whether…</td></tr>
<tr><td>4.</td><td>Mandi (M):</td><td>[I think it's a</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.</td><td></td><td>good point. It all comes up to real markets. The</td></tr>
<tr><td>6.</td><td></td><td>Chinese are not bothered by that.</td></tr>
<tr><td>7.</td><td>Fiona:</td><td>Whether French or Italian it…</td></tr>
<tr><td>8.</td><td>Mandi:</td><td>[Whether French or Italian or</td></tr>
<tr><td>9.</td><td></td><td>Zimbabwean for that matter, they are not bothered by all that.</td></tr>
<tr><td>10.</td><td></td><td>And I think because of the controversy that is surrounding</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.</td><td></td><td>Zimbabwe, its one country right now which most people know</td></tr>
<tr><td>12.</td><td></td><td>about. If you go to any country, they may not know where it is</td></tr>
<tr><td>13.</td><td></td><td>but they have all heard about President Mugabe (uhm, yes). But</td></tr>
<tr><td>14.</td><td></td><td>let's say there is no publicity that's bad publicity.</td></tr>
<tr><td>15.</td><td>Fiona:</td><td>At least what we are saying is that everyone now knows about</td></tr>
<tr><td>16.</td><td></td><td>this country called Zimbabwe where…</td></tr>
<tr><td>17.</td><td>Bradley:</td><td>[It's all to do with</td></tr>
<tr><td>18.</td><td></td><td>how we project ourselves as a country. If we…</td></tr>
<tr><td>19.</td><td>Rex:</td><td>[And more</td></tr>
<tr><td>20.</td><td></td><td>importantly who we align ourselves with as a country. Those</td></tr>
<tr><td>21.</td><td></td><td>will be our trade partners.</td></tr>
</table>

The excerpt is taken from a portion of the meeting where the consultant is, with the help of the participants, drawing up a list of the possible business opportunities that the company could pursue and exploit in order to expand its customer base. In the preceding moments, where it was largely women who were coming up with suggestions and points, Mandi boldly ratifies the point made prior to his entering the floor by cutting in (*I think it's a good point…*) before Fiona completes her turn. Fiona then takes a turn at a transition relevant place and as she attempts to ask a question whether it would matter if the trade partners were French or Italian, Mandi interrupts her again before she can develop her point, to reiterate the point made earlier about the trade partners being either French or Italian. Mandi then takes over the floor and seeks to gain control over the conversation by getting his turn ratified by co-interactants through speaking forcefully (field notes), which results in him being listened to. Mandi proceeds to command control over the rest of that conversation by bringing in the emotive topic of Zimbabwe, in itself a side sequence, leading to the more collaborative venture marked by the repeated use of the all inclusive pronoun '*we*' by both Bradley and Rex. Fiona agrees with him that their problem is to do with *how we project ourselves as a*

country, but before she can develop her point, another male, Bradley, interrupts her by picking up her thread of argument midway (*It's all to do with how we project ourselves as a country*). Bradley is in turn, not allowed the opportunity to develop his point fully as Rex interrupts him with a claims that his point is more sound (*and more importantly...*). The meeting gradually develops in a new direction through the co-construction of ideas with participants interrupting one another and operating on what Edelsky (1981) refers to as the 'same wavelength,' as issues of nationalism, patriotism, hegemony and politics are discussed but with the participants not necessarily agreeing. This particular floor was brought to a close by the consultant concluding the discussion and from then on, the debate was steered back to identifying possible business opportunities in the region.

In other instances, men tended to interrupt a speaker on the floor by butting in and making very strong assertions, being emphatic or making negations of the point preceding their own. This is supported in Appendix A, *l* 245, when the male interlocutor boldly claims *That is not enough* in response to a suggestion from a female and proceeds to make his own proposition. Interrupting another in a meeting can be interpreted as a show of overt authority and expertise or disrespect. The excerpts 4b-4d below serve as further examples of this. In the first example, M interrupts F through repudiation of the point made by F. Because this was very direct, F is forced to back-off from her point and she gives up her turn to M.

Excerpt 4b: (Safari Co: Day 5)

1.	F:	Well I think their countries support them in a…
2.	M:	[Wrong. You have
3.		to start feeling good about yourselves and appreciating where you
4.		are in the frame of things. A country cannot be said to support you
5.		directly. We need to position ourselves so that we are in the benefit
6.		pathway so to speak. You hear what I'm saying? Things wont just
7.		happen. We have to make them happen.

In Excerpt 4c below, M2 disputes M1's point with a retort made at a non transition relevant place, which could be interpreted as a sign of outrage, disbelief or disrespect of the point being made. He is in fact offering an assessment in his contribution and makes a subtle suggestion that M 1's source of information is highly questionable.

Excerpt 4c: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 3)

1.	M1:	The insurance industry in this country is gaining in strength and if
2.		we…
3.	M2:	[Ha! and which journal did you get that from?

In the excerpt below, the interruption is made in a very authoritarian, assertive voice as M2 lays the bottom line.

<div style="background:#eee">

Excerpt 4d: (*WES Co: Day 3*)
1.   M1:   We should not be lending if our recovery policies are…
2.   M2   [If we can't
3.   collect then we should not lend. That's the bottom line.

</div>

In Excerpt 4e below, M2's interruption, offered in the form of an indignant directive (*Can you pause right there*) is extremely authoritarian and bordering on a show of annoyance. This is followed by his reformulation of the topic as he states what it is that is not being discussed.

<div style="background:#eee">

Excerpt 4e: (*Safari Co: Day 1*)
1.   M1:   We do not want a situation where the workers see top
2.   management as divided as this
3.   M2:   [Can you pause right there. We are not
4.   discussing our image here. The core issue is whether we are
5.   doing things the right way. Are we performing? Can those we
6.   claim to lead get direction from us? That's what we should be
7.   discussing and not all these other things.

</div>

Interruption in this manner is a gate keeping exercise, an activity often associated with exercise of power as a way of bringing the discussion back on course. It was also observed that interruptions by their nature and form constitute the one interrupted as a novice and the interrupter as an expert. The results of Beattie's (1981) study of the influence of power bases of expertise and occupational status on floor apportionment support my observation. The results revealed that occupational status had an effect upon interruption patterns; namely, that in terms of overall frequency of interruption, the lower status individuals, men or women, were interrupted significantly more frequently than they themselves interrupted, findings which would suggest that interruptions are a reflection of dominance in social interaction.

In the instance cited above (excerpt 4e), the interruption has some additional significance, signalling what Cook (1990) suggests could be a show of annoyance with the speaker on the floor. Here, the director of finance was becoming agitated with the line of questioning and the general direction of discussion. Throughout the data, men were noted to have a

desire to correct their colleagues and to steer the course of the discussion which is a definite power strategy.

On the other hand there were many examples of unsuccessful interruption by women of male floor space and turns. The example below typically demonstrates the point being made. Altogether there were 15 noted examples of women failing to interrupt the speech of men. The excerpt below serves as an example.

Excerpt 5a: (*Truba Bank: Day 3*)
1.   José: If the inflation rate has officially been pegged at 200% then ...
2.   Fiona: [Yes we need…

         Jose looks at Fiona who immediately keeps quiet (*field notes*).
1.   José: [We need to reconsider our lending rate more
2.   realistically. I know that this is something that we cannot
3.   decide here and now but I wish to have it noted Mr Chairman that
4.   we need to resolve this as a matter of urgency.

From the 27 hour corpus, it emerged that out of the total of 47 instances making up interruptions, women actually gained the floor on only 12 occasions and in 8 of those instances it was the older women whose voice was 'allowed' to prevail possibly out of deference and in the remaining six times, the woman happened to be the deputy to the chair and so it could be argued that occupational status was a significant factor in floor apportionment. In Appendix A, *l*.72 serves as an example of the successful interruption of a man by a woman when the woman takes the floor energetically (*Yes because when an international guest comes …*). In this instance, as observed in Beattie's (1981) study, the interruption functioned as support of someone else's idea, by finishing off a suggestion, rather than as a take-over bid. Men, it was noted, gained the floor by interrupting the speaker on 35 occasions. They were able to intrude into turns and gained the floor by for example, raising their voices to speak above everyone else or by marking the beginning of their interrupting turn by the use of emphatic markers like the one cited immediately above (*Can you pause right there),* and others for example, *infact…, let me say this…*, *let me help you…* and negation markers (*no no no, I beg to differ…),* found elsewhere in the data. It was also noted that men often gained the floor by their loud disparaging laughter either from an individual or a number of participants, usually the young men, which in most cases resulted in the abrupt end of a turn.

Another interesting feature of floor management manifest in my data and one closely related to interruption was the phenomenon of simultaneous speech. As observed by Coates (1988), Edelsky (1981) and Tannen (1984), simultaneous speech is distinct from both interruption and overlap in the sense that it refers to an instance where there is more than one speaker speaking at a time with each one possibly following their own argument. According to Coates (1984), simultaneous speech falls into six categories ranging from one speaker's voice dominating and taking over the space to several speakers speaking at once. From an analytical point of view, Sacks et al's (1974) neat description of talk-in-interaction, where one speaker speaks at a time was not wholly supported in my data. The evidence that came through was that, on the contrary, and for much of the time especially in the discussion sections of meetings, more than one speaker spoke at a time. From the sample corpus recorded, 45 instances of simultaneous talk by two or more people were noted. In the interactions I recorded, similar types of simultaneous speech patterns as observed by Coates (1988:107) were noted. Below is an adapted outline of the different types.

1. Type A: Two speakers self select at the same time and one stops
2. Type B: Speaker B self selects at transition relevant place, A trails off
3. Type C: Speaker B self selects at transition relevant place, A maintains floor, B stops
4. Type D: Speaker B asks question or comments while A is speaking
5. Type E: Speaker B comments, A stops speaking
6. Type F: Two or more speakers speak at the same time

In the meetings observed, both men and women were in one way or the other, involved in simultaneous speech. **Type A,** where more than one speaker starts at the same time was a common occurrence. When this happened, one speaker inevitably trailed off and allowed the other to speak. The unwritten rule from the evidence suggested that the speaker in a position of higher authority such as the chair or, the one who had a stronger voice than the other, male or female, prevailed. There were therefore no gender based differences. **Type B,** like type a, was inevitable as turns are not ordinarily allocated and interactants self-select as they see necessary. It was noted however that on average, men prevailed over women 3 to1. **Type C** was more prevalent and was open to various interpretations. In the example below, the term interruption would be inappropriate as speaker B 'interrupts' by way of an exclamation, at a transition relevant place because of her enthusiasm and evident feelings about the topic under discussion, what Tannen (1984) calls the 'overlap-as-enthusiasm strategy. Speaker A however maintains the floor.

Excerpt 5b (i): (ODT Insurance Co: Day 4)

1.	F1 (A):	We might just want to do that {considering that our currency}
2.	F2 (B):	{But that's just the point}
3.	F1 (A):	is not gaining much strength. We are operating in a free fall
4.		environment

In the next excerpt, the second speaker (Lucas) self selects at a transition relevant place and tries to overlap the speaker's contribution. The speaker on the floor (Bheki) maintains the floor and the second speaker stops.

Excerpt 5b (ii)

1.	Bheki:	What I am saying is, if we are to get good indicators from the micro
2.		markets as we have them listed in the report recently issued which by
3.		the
4.	Lucas:	{Yes but the question is how are we categorising...}
5.	Bheki:	way, are not by province anymore but by catchment area, and if I
6.		may add, we have had a lot of requests from the other divisions,
7.		then…

Type D involves B asking a question while A is still speaking. A interrupts herself to acknowledge B's question before continuing her statement about the launch. In the data, asides or comments made as the person on the floor continued to speak appeared more frequently than direct questions and it was up to the speaker whether they paused to reply or chose to continue with their turn. *ll.* 317-319 in Appendix A are a typical example of this. Charles tries to complete Mandla's utterance as he suggests that they should *blow* (their) *trumpets* and in this instance, Mandla the speaker adopts the suggested action and continues with his turn. The frequency of whether one stopped or continued with their turn did not appear determined by the gender of the turn holder but more by the type of meeting. In the report type meetings, it was understood by all that comments and questions were only entertained at the end. In the strategic planning meetings, interruptions were more frequent and in the more loosely organised meetings like the ones at Safari Company it was the floor holder who decided to acknowledge the comment with the noted result that women tended to pause more frequently to listen or respond to listener comments and often risked losing control of both turn and floor, often to a male colleague as the example below illustrates.

1.	F:	We are thinking of launching the product end of May and…
2.	M:	[In which cities?
3.	F:	Well we are thinking of starting off in Bulawa…
4.	M:	Because I think it is important to
5.		be clear about our strategy. In the road show we had in February, the
6.		branches were very vocal about the perceived preference we seem to
7.		have for the bigger centres and yet the rural outlets bring in just as
8.		much business.

Occasionally too (15 instances noted) questions or comments of this type coincided with the current speaker discontinuing speaking as B joined the floor as happened above. This could be an indication from A that she actually welcomes B's contribution as a constructive and collaborative joint venture as B offers more detail. A allowing B into her exposition, leading to B taking over completely her turn could also be part recognition of the fact that B is the expert on the matter or simply that he has more information. Altogether, 10 instances were noted of women 'allowing' male colleagues to take over their turn. **Type E** simultaneous talk was also observed as closely related to power and role relations within the boardroom. When the Chairperson or the accountant asked a question or made a comment mid-stream of another's turn, more often than not, the addressor, male or female, gave up their turn as the example below shows.

Excerpt 5d: (*Safari Co: Day 2*)

1.	M1:	Our marketing record is not that bad, I mean there is room for
2.		improvement and…
3.	CA:	[Can we be more specific and speak in terms of figures
4.		and benchmarks. In these meetings we need to be specific. What
5.		exactly are we saying about our record in that regard?
6.	M2:	In my view the company ought to be seeking ways of re-aligning
7.		itself to the rest of the group. Up to now we have been talking of
8.		marketing as though we are totally independent. We have certain
9.		constraints both from within and without. At the last review meeting,
10.		Mr Mavu called the meeting to take a closer look at our goals and
11.		how these merge into the brand values.

Giving up of one's turn on a highly contested floor often results in total loss of the floor as other views are introduced and the debate more often than not takes on a new turn and significance. Overlaps of this nature may also often define the perception that the second speaker has of the other. It was also evident that the younger members, both male and female tended to give up their turns to older members or those in positions perceived as

being of a higher status. Altogether 16 instances of this phenomenon were noted. As a male respondent in the FGDs remarked:

> *Aiwaka you just feel haunga kwikwidzani nevakuru*
> *(Translated) No, no no one just feels they cannot be in competition with seniors.*

The comment above, as discussed in Coates and Cameron (1988) makes the concept of male 'dominance' itself rather problematical. While many studies have shown that in mixed–sex conversation (as in for instance, Fishman's 1978a study, where topics initiated by men were more often ratified and pursued) men's interests tend to be better served, it appears the case that both women and the younger men in my data contribute to this state of affairs. In other words, the 'dominance' or 'control' does not come about as a result of men, when juxtaposed against women, or the younger men when conversing with people older than them are linguistically forced into submission. It appears that where it is seen as normal that men or the older participants talk more, they may do so with the complicity of both women and the younger men.

The final type of simultaneous speech, **Type F,** involves two or more speakers speaking at once. For this type, it was not possible to say or determine which speaker had the floor and which one was merely interjecting. There were many examples of this which had a unique character all of their own. Speakers did not become aggrieved when others joined in. The general feeling at some point in most meetings was that all participants were familiar with the issue under discussion and because each one had something to say, the norm, in public domains of a speaker at a time, was momentarily set aside as participants struggled to grab speaker ship, with individuals vying for turns. The floor was often so intently contested by all members both male and female, that the meeting dissolved into near chaos. The meetings at the UTC site and in fewer instances at the motor insurance site serve as examples of this. The goal did not however appear to be to take the floor from another speaker, but to participate in the meeting where the chair or turn mechanisms were no longer effective due to over-enthusiasm on the part of the participants, the slow pace of the meeting or the emotiveness of the issue under contention.

5.3.5 Topic control as a conversation management strategy

Topic control in meetings is an important element in interactional control. When one presents a topic, except in some special situations, one may be assured that participants will try to talk topically. Fairclough (1992:155) points out that there are a great many diverse topics which can be construed as relevant which can be introduced by co-interactants in conversation as part of the politics of their interaction. Sacks (1987) also points out that there is significance in the way conversations are developed and people chain topics together in talking topically. In meetings, this can give much insight into the relationships between members who should, by virtue of their role status, have equal rights and obligations.

In this section, I discuss the importance of topic control in meetings and show how the ability to introduce and control the topic of discussion is a significant variable in the way men and women use different strategies to manage talk. This is followed by a discussion of 'idea chaining' which is closely linked to topic control and refers to the way in which speakers can choose to link or deliberately not link their ideas to those of the previous speaker. Through CA, the analyst can look at the methods that people use to participate in and make sense of an utterance in its immediate context as he or she tries to describe and analyse how speakers introduce topics and interactants hold or control a topic and how others may choose to tie their turn to the one before or forge a different topic. Each one of these moves can be open to different interpretation depending on the context of the utterance as discussed below.

In the boardroom, as in ordinary conversation, it was observed that in a discussion which is progressing reasonably well, talk drifts imperceptibly from one topic to another. The most usual way of doing this is by tying grammatically and topically to what has gone on before as a way of showing the relatedness of one's contribution in a debate, bearing pressure on participants in general, or interlocutors in an adjacency pair, to make topically coherent utterances as part of conversation management. Failure to develop the topic this way may be interpreted to mean the contribution immediately before was considered irrelevant, unimportant or prematurely made because in tying, a speaker is forced to show whether he

did or did not understand what went on before and must therefore display what Sacks et al (1974) refer to as elements of 'why that now'.

The following excerpts show how men typically avoid talking topically, preferring to skip-connect (Coulthard, 1977), that is, relating back to the last-but-one utterance, usually their own, or one raised by another male colleague. This excerpt was taken from a meeting where the average age of the participants was 35 and possibly at the onset of their careers and competition among participants to have their ideas discussed was evident.

Excerpt 6a: (WES Co: Day 3)		
1.	Fidelis:	When I was interrupted by Farai, the point I wanted us to look at is
2.		whether our service standards are comparable to those in industries
3.		similar to ours
4.	Eric:	What would be the point of that? We are aiming at uniqueness.
5.		That should be the operative word. Let us talk rather about how we
6.		can clean up our act after our much publicised abortive attempt at
7.		trying to get a bigger market share
8.	Jones:	Are you saying that we should not be aware of what the
9.		competition is doing?
10.	Ronald:	As I said before, our competitors are looking at the possibility of a
11.		merger with a South African company and that is what we should
12.		be focussing on, the might of our competition
13.	Chair:	Can we discuss one topic at a time please so we can note the
14.		recommendations more clearly?

As is evident in the excerpt above, each time one of the participants got a turn, it was noted that they more often than not, declined to talk about the previous speaker's topic and introduced or reasserted their own. Eric, Jones and Ronald are each trying to get their own point across by not ratifying the turn before their own until the chair calls the meeting to order (*one topic at a time please so we can note the recommendations more clearly*). In the meeting presented as Appendix A, Mandhla displays the same tendency of not ratifying the turn before his own. He decides to move away from the topic of re-branding introduced by Sam in *l* 97, to talk about internal operations *ll.* 104-105, a topic he pursues later in the meeting. Not ratifying the topic of another signifies competitive talk within a given bounded encounter as speakers or indeed one of the two interlocutors may want to develop the topic in different ways owing to a number of reasons. Belief that they have a substantial contribution to make, wishing to score a point and to be 'on record', realisation there will be no further opportunity to say what they want to say or simply wanting to be heard and at the same time

endorse their membership of the group through active participation, are evident ways of conversation dominance and repressive discourse. Fairclough (1992) observes further that topics are often introduced and changed by the dominant participant, an observation supported by Fishman (1983) in her investigation of topic control.

The example below is taken from a strategic planning meeting that was long and animated as the meeting degenerated into a fault finding and witch hunting exercise. This phase of the meeting was particularly characterised by competitiveness, a feature used to describe the adversarial style of conversation where speakers vie for turns and where participants are more likely to contradict each other than offer each other support as they compete for turns.

In the excerpts below, I show how men use topic control mechanisms as they seek to maintain control over what is discussed in meetings as a way of influencing outcomes. These will be compared with the strategies used by women to shift or control topics. The general theme of discussion is the marketing strategy of the company which has been tabled as an aspect needing urgent attention. Each speaker attempts to develop the topic in a different way and there is evident lack of basic cooperation even though the speakers are in turn, talking around the same topic.

		Excerpt 6b: (Safari Co: Day 3)
1.	M1:	Lets be practical. To me, marketing is about business development.
2.	M2:	Marketing is about identifying customer needs then meeting them, so
3.		basically you will be trying to make your customers happy.
4.	M3:	PR is one aspect of it.
5.	F:	No I think we are mixing issues here. Let's look specifically at our
6.		marketing strategies and tactics.
7.	M4:	No PR might have nothing to do with…
8.	M5:	[No PR is the basic existence in a
9.		society, yes it has nothing to do with selling yourselves, it has nothing
10.		to do with your corporate image, what people see when they see your
11.		people, without having to deal with them, without having to speak to
12.		them, walking past through your office, that image that you portray,
13.		that's your PR
14.	M6:	So what has the image done for...eh...everyone who walks by? I don't
15.		think its just good standing for the sake of good standing. I see PR…
16.	M7:	[Good standing is
17.		more of...eh...you get more positive images.
18.	M3:	Yes which must eventually convert to benefit the business, whether it's
19.		coming or whatever the things that are done there that at some point
20.		the business must grow
21.	M8:	Shutting down in terms of legislation and you find people like very

22.		active eh PR people who would go and lobby and make sure the
23.		government is happy and made sure that all the right people were
24.		happy, very happy
25.	M5:	They did as well (*laughter*)

The excerpt above is a typical example of men orienting to very different discourse norms from those used by women as they compete for control of the topic under discussion. To begin with, the structure of topic development does not in any way resemble the one used by women which is based on cooperativeness (discussed below). M1 starts off by asking his colleagues to *be practical,* a request with an underlying assertion that the participants are not making considered statements. He then gives an explanation of what to him is marketing. Re-inscribing oneself (*To me*), is a linguistic feature used in talk-in-interaction, to highlight ownership of an idea being expressed as well as to emphasise the point being made (Appendix A has 5 examples of men using the linguistic feature in *ll.* 36, 163, 179, 190-191 and 358). M2 typically rejects M1's point and proceeds to give his own definition of marketing as an alternative. Giving of definitions is itself an overt display of expertise and knowledge in a given field. M3's contribution is again not directly linked to the one above, preferring to bring in another aspect of the business but not expanding on it or making obvious its connectivity. F's ability to analyse issues at a more local level and in the context of discussion, a characteristic feature of women's contributions (noted in the 'whole' data), is ignored totally by M4 who reverts back to M3's contribution, preferring to skip-connect to an idea raised before F spoke. In an attempt to explain the function of public relations, M4's turn is overlapped by M5 who, like M2, attempts a definition and explanation of PR, which M6 tries to better by one of his own (*I see PR as …*), before M7 offers a topic solution (*…Good standing is…*), and at that, one not totally independent of M6's but without acknowledging it. M3, agreeing with M7, expands on M5's idea, in itself not a very substantial contribution and proffered perhaps as an 'on record' strategy or simply wanting to be heard and at the same time as a way of endorsing his membership of the group through participation. M8's contribution is an example of how men can introduce a line of argument divergent from the general (11 noted instances) as he brings in issues of the legislators (*…PR people lobby… to make sure the government is happy*), commentary firmly situated in the Zimbabwean political and economic context and one which invites the humorous quip by M5. It was also noted in this study as by Maltz and Borker (1982) that men's topic development strategies generally did not include frequent and well placed minimal responses from other males as a way of showing support for the topic being discussed.

In the example above (excerpt 6b), men evidently come into open disagreement with other participants over what should be the focus of the discussion. The text is also characterised by abrupt topic shifts and turn taking moves. By and large in the text selected for close analysis, it was men who dominated the talk, albeit that in all meetings men outnumbered women, as men's topics were more often ratified (a count of 38 topics were ratified by women as opposed to the 10 that were sanctioned by men) and pursued in three or more subsequent turns. Where they felt threatened by women, men boldly reasserted their own as the more valid or simply ignored the topic raised by a female counterpart as evident in excerpt 6b where the female's observation that they are *mixing issues*, is ignored. This point is raised repeatedly in the FGDs. One female respondent (Margaret) commented:

> *They would rather their topics were discussed and they will do anything to make sure the meeting is steered towards ratifying their topic and regrettably the chair often allows it to happen.*

This had the effect that men's topics were more often pursued and this consequently portrayed them as the dominant parties in mixed gender discussions. The works of Fishman (1983), Hirschman (1973) and West and Zimmerman (1985) support this contention. Their work has shown an asymmetry in the take up of topics where it was proved men's topics were more often accepted by women who played a supportive role than vice-versa. Topic management can therefore be regarded as a local instance of a more general power struggle which in mixed interactions, works in favour of men who were anyway in the majority in almost all the meetings which form my database.

Topic control by women is considerably different from how men generate and develop their topics. Set against the notion of competitiveness where male participants are more likely to contradict each other's contributions in their effort to control the topic of discussion and to be heard, is the notion of cooperativeness in the conversation and topic development by women. Women were observed building on each other's contributions differently, preferring continuity to discontinuity. Unlike with men, topic shift was noted as occurring gradually rather than abruptly as observed above. The episode that I will use to base my argument on is taken from a review meeting of a division in which the ratio of women to men was 4:1. The selection was deliberate and in keeping with the rare element sampling method (see 4.2.1) as I intended to offer a description and analysis of topic control in terms of the relations between setting, participants, topic, form and function. The strength of this methodological choice

(rare element sampling) is that it puts women in the majority, talking to and with other women firmly centre stage and therefore allows for observations to be made about women's behaviour in a mixed group where the norm is in reverse, that is, a situation in which women are in the majority in order to observe the phenomenon more critically.

For easier reference, the structure of the extract is as listed below and the characters are noted as (F) for female and (M) for male

(F1, chair)	introduces topic
(F2, F3, F1)	ratify topic
(F3)	develops topic by reference to report
(F4, M1, M2, F5, F6)	general discussion by all
(F5)	summarises
(F1)	concludes

(Adapted from Coates, 1988)

In interactional terms, 1 and 2 form the introduction, 3 is the introduction of detail and 4 is the development of the topic. 5 is the recapitulation and 6 are the closing remarks from the chair, a characteristic feature of meetings. The excerpt below and the discussion that follows it, serve to demonstrate the case in point.

Excerpt 6c: (WES Co: Day 4)

                    Introduction
1.   (F1):   I would at this moment like us to look more closely
2.   at how the claims division is doing in terms of its set targets.
3.   We've had a group travel to the UK to understudy the claims
4.   division and I believe the coming on board of Maria and Alice
5.   has also brought about a number of very interesting changes.
6.   They have been talking to me about it
7.   Ratification of topic
8.   (F2):   I would actually call them brilliant ideas uhm brilliant in that I
9.   think in that we are beginning to see <u>a lot</u> of activity in that
10.   division (yes yes) <u>a lot</u>. There is <u>a lot</u> happening and at the last
11.   meeting we did not have time to listen to the changes which are
12.   coming in, being brought in and I feel…
13.   (F3):   I was going to suggest that we actually listen to the report that I
14.   believe Alice wanted to read to present to us
15.   (F1):   Can claims please put their paper on the table thank you?

Meeting goes into recess briefly as participants read report
                    Expansion of topic and general discussion
1.   (F4):   I think that this is a very interesting paper more so the ideas in it
2.   (M1):   I see here on page 3 that they intend to supervise the servicing of
3.   cars that are being bought on HP

4.	(M2):	How does that help anyone?
5.	(F5):	I think the point here, the idea is to make sure in an indirect
6.		manner that the cars, which really are still ours (laughter) are kept
7.		in good condition then they are still in good condition (**uhm**) so
8.		that if we have to repossess them for whatever (**uhm**) ya ya then
9.		they are still in good condition. I know companies in South Africa
10.		that are in the same lending business as us. They are also into this
11.		into eh eh what do you call it? (( )) Its part of the service
12.		package (**uhm**) we offer our clients the details of this service,
13.		which are laid out in the second section of this paper.
14.	(F6):	I should imagine this benefits everyone, the parties involved,
15.		everyone.
16.	(M1):	You mean us… (Laughter)
17.		<u>Summary</u>
18.	(F3):	I've put down a number of ideas that we are obviously going
19.		to introduce in phases and we would appreciate your comments
20.		please. This is still a working document but maybe it won't work.
21.		<u>Chair concludes discussion</u>
22.	(F1):	If we could all please study it and see how it will impact on your
23.		divisions. I just want all of us to commit to the ideas of others.

Pre-sequencing of ideas as discussed in (5.3.2 above) is a common way of introducing a new topic in interactions taking place in the front stage (Goffman, 1971). In this example, the chairperson, the one participant clearly institutionally responsible for the conduct of the meeting directs the attention of the group. What characterises these introductory sections and sets them apart from the central development section is that they are very often monologues. The introduction of a topic normally gives the speaker unusual rights to speak. It is important to note that the chair's co-participants listen and say nothing until she reaches a commonly realised and legitimate end, a privilege not enjoyed by the male introducer of topic in the contrasted excerpt. They accord her the right to establish a new topic and it is only when this point is reached that other participants volunteer supportive ideas. No one attempts to make a substantive contribution until it is clear that (F1) has completed her turn. The new topic is ratified when (F2), (F3) and (F1) enter the floor in clear support (…*would actually call them brilliant ideas*), (…*actually listen to the report*), (*put their paper on the table*) which reinforces the points raised by the chair and F2. Though (F2) reformulates the chair's evaluation of the division's initiatives, this should be taken as a reflection of the cooperativeness of women in conversation, a feature observed in this excerpt and elsewhere in the data. Repetition of the expression (*a lot*) three times in a turn of 55 words further escalates the support, and the idea being discussed is linked to the last meeting, a clear example of the characteristic use of gradual topic development by women. F2's final

comment is unfinished as F3 starts at a point which she interprets as the end of F2's turn and her suggestion is a clear indication that the members of the group now feel they have established what topic is under discussion, prompting F1 to suggest that the paper be circulated.

The discussion section, where speakers evaluate the topic allows turn taking by all. Discussion topics in general are often very complex. Several speakers tend to want to speak at once and the speaker turns of women on average are inclined to be brief compared to those taken by men. In this meeting however, the participants accommodated the other members and turns were negotiated through a clear recognition of the one-at-a time type conversation. At the one level, individual speakers are observed offering their own value judgements (*I think that* (2x), (*I should imagine*), (*I believe*) which are offered tactfully and with due care to the feelings of others. The value judgement in line 16, offered by one of the two males attending the meeting stands in direct contrast. He challenges the ideas and assumptions being made in a confrontational way (*How does that help anyone?*) The topic is further developed by other women in subsequent turns through for example, justification (*…are kept in good condition),* cause and effect (*…if we have to repossess them, they are in good condition*) and exemplification (*… I know companies in South Africa).* Another female supports the point made above by pointing out that this innovation should benefit everyone, to which the second male present at the meeting retorts *you mean us,* an instance of humour in the boardroom discussed more fully in 5.4.9 below. F5 then summarises the division's plan and asks the group to study the document and offer comments. Hers is the summarising comment. The last sentence by F5 includes a self effacing strategy (*but maybe it won't work),* an expression of self-doubt often associated with powerlessness and stemming from an aspect of gender-role socialisation where in Zimbabwean culture, women interacting in a group are not encouraged to make bold declarative statements (Gaidzanwa, 1985). F1, as chair, has the last word, a subtle suggestion of the way forward and an invitation to assess the innovation *…and see how it will impact on your division.*

The example above shows how women work together in conversation and tend to develop topics slowly and accretively, because participants build on each other's contributions and jointly arrive at a consensus. The minimal responses (uhm) function as assenting and enabling devices (highlighted further in 5.4.1). Female participants characteristically use minimal responses to signal their active listenership and support for the current speaker. They use

them too, to mark their recognition of the different stages of conversation development as the responses are not incidental but are uttered at transition relevant places. The epistemic modal forms used largely by women in topic development serve the purpose of showing respect for the face needs of all participants, to negotiate sensitive topics, and to encourage the participation of others by not taking a hard-line stance, a rare feature in men's' conversation. Linguistic forms which mitigate the force of individual contributions are a valuable resource where a group, rather than an individual overview, is the aim of discussion.

Women, it was evident, were more concerned than men to get consensus at the end of a discussion as was expressed in the FDGs where a female respondent (Leonie) explained;

> *I believe that the idea behind debate is to tease out information from various sources until the group arrives at a common decision otherwise why do we bother to meet and discuss?*

Another major difference in the way men and women manage topics, take turns and manage the floor, was in the way that they linked or did not deliberately link their ideas to those of the previous speaker. As discussed in Chapter 3 above, CA looks at the methods that people use to participate in and make sense of an utterance in its immediate context. Coulthard (1977) refers to this style of floor development and management as the chaining of ideas, a technique that members of a group utilise to interpret and act within their social world. This linkage shows a high degree of hierarchical interdependence where, by chaining one's idea to the former speaker's utterance, the holder of the floor is using a discursive strategy to add authority and weight to his own statement. Expert views may be further transferred by the addressor or addressee choosing to transmit their ideology in the process of selectively assimilating the former speaker's words and retelling them in their own turn using their own framework. This is a subtle way of influencing the addressee's or listener's cognitive process of understanding and minimising the gap of interpretation. As Hayachi (1997) points out, by selectively assimilating the former speaker's words and retelling them, the addressor reminds the listener of the authority of the expert cited as well as his own, through co-constructively invoking shared schemata. This also means the speakers jointly owning the floor are negotiating ongoing meaning during the turn exchange. In the transcribed data, men were notable by the way they did not link their turn to the speaker before them and failed to talk topically. Not chaining one's speech to the one preceding it (unlike clear change of topic) may on occasion be innocent, implicit or presupposed by the speaker. It can also connote the

assertive attitude of the speaker. Women's responses on the other hand tended to be linked to prior talk. Women were observed chaining their ideas and thoughts to those of the preceding speaker as they each took a turn, hence confirming acknowledgement of the prior utterance and contribution.

The example below is typical of how women operate in a collaborative venture in building meaning as two or more people jointly develop meaning through the co-construction of an idea, by cooperatively operating on the 'same wavelength' and making it apparent as each takes up a turn. The ratio of men to women in this meeting was 12:9 and the extract itself is drawn from the last quarter of the meeting.

Excerpt 6d: (Safari company: Day 4)

1.	F(1)	I want to emphasise that while we may talk about eh…, I mean we
2.		should take pride in the strengths that we have because let's be very open about the weaknesses because that's what pulls us down.
3.	F (2)	And that's what you need to work on. Your strengths are there. But
4.		your weaknesses are what you need to work on.
5.	F (3)	I think we're weak in terms of new product ideas. We've been
6.		selling the same product for a long time if you like. What we don't
7.		do is come up with a totally, totally new idea. I don't know what it
8.		is. We need to, as Safari Company, to have something new every
9.		so often, to just have something to introduce onto the market.
10.	F (4)	I would agree with that.
11.	F (1)	So innovation, people are not innovative. So what happens is
12.		people are satisfied with a product when it's available. So
13.		nobody…
14.	M (1)	We also have to look at modifying, making new changes to a
15.		product. Let's look at a Zvimba rural tour (commotion as people all
16.		talk at the same time and some laughing)
17.	F (5)	And the other issue is that a new product idea should be driven by
18.		the market. If you develop a product idea and there is no uptake,
19.		then it means that maybe it was not supposed to be.
20.	F (6)	And speaking about this, Zvimba village tour, we have people
21.		coming to Harare and from here, a morning trip to the village could
22.		be a value add.

In the excerpt above, women typically speak in support of one another and immediately following the turn of the other but in relatively short contributions, what Coates (1988) refers to as 'gender networks' and consequently forming a speech enclave. This is done through the use of linguistic connectors at the beginning of an utterance such as I *would agree…* (*l*.14), *so innovation…* (*l*.15), *and the other issue…* (*l*.23) *and speaking about…* (*l*.27). Corroborating instances drawn from Appendix A are; *And can we also consider* (*l*.56), *also another great…*

(*l*.216) *So…* (*ll. 165* and 332). Throughout this example, women are observed selectively assimilating the former speaker's words and retelling them in their own turn using their own framework. Examples of this are *talk of strengths... l.5) and...* (*ll.5, 20 and 24*), *new ideas... (l.7)* as examples of *innovation... (l.15), new products... (l. 19) and the Zvimba tour... (ll, 19 and 25).* What is of particular interest in this speech enclave is that the male participant adopts the female mode of speech as he uncharacteristically links his contribution to that of the former (*We also have to look at modifying... l.*18) and the woman who takes up the turn after him typically chains her idea to his.

5.3.6   Monitoring talk as a conversation management strategy

Another strategy that professionals operating at managerial level often use to manage talk, assert themselves and control the flow of meetings is to summarise the progress of the discussion at given intervals. Summation of points, which is intrinsic to the success of meetings, is a discourse convention that serves the explicit function in CA terms, of controlling the development of the interaction towards successful resolution. As discussed in Chapter 3, the use of CA as an approach in analysis of data allows for the close examination of turns to observe how conversation is conducted and managed to achieve targeted outcomes in ongoing interaction. By constantly policing the progress of the discussion (Fairclough, 1992), participants can monitor the progress of debate and minimise on the possible occurrence of side sequences. Devices such as asking guiding questions to steer the direction of the conversation, for clarification of a point or confirmation of understanding, for verifying decisions and making them more explicit and seeking common understanding at regular points throughout the meeting are institutionally recognisable ways of monitoring the progress and course of discussion at this level. Those in positions of authority also tend to overtly express approval and to make critical or challenging statements. CA makes it possible to examine the relevance of an utterance as it relates to the turn before by examining the overtly lexicalised propositional content of an utterance. This enables participants to monitor and manage conversation, a function closely associated with the construction of power.

The following excerpt, demonstrates how the more mature women conduct themselves as they monitor the discussion in ways similar to those adopted by their male colleagues, while the younger women behave differently. In the first excerpt, Agnes and Anna, both over 40,

hound Joseph the marketing manager to get clarification and commitment from him about his projected move in creating greater awareness of and visibility for the company.

Excerpt 7a: (Safari Co: Day 2)
1. Agnes: Can I ask then, maybe our Marketing and PR is not as aggressive.
2. Anna: I was going to say do we have no identity (yah) that is coming
3. out here (uhm). We do not have the kind of presence that is
4. required for anyone to actually say (uhm) no Safari Co is kicking
5. in the (( ))
6. Joseph: Well not exactly. What we have is eh eh …
7. Agnes: [Do you have? No you don't have
8. a dedicated marketing team no?
9. Joseph: I I I would not want to answer that now I think …
10. Agnes: [Yes and no. It's a
11. no. It's a process that we have done things that would talk to the
12. market. We have talked to the customers. That we know. But
13. admitted yes, we we are working on staffing for our marketing
14. department that's …but…
15. Fiona: [No we are going backwards. Please no,
16. we are not being defensive.
17. Joseph: No we are not defensive we want to move forward and I am
18. saying…
19. Agnes: [I-I-I am actually I am trying to get us to move
20. forward …how are we going to raise awareness. I am just talking
21. about a a a marketing team so I am saying do you have a
22. marketing team? If not what are you doing about it? Let's move
23. forward.
24. Joseph: We're actually in the process of recruiting the marketing
25. personnel
26. Agnes: Because that's what you need but what I wanted to say is we have
27.   never at one point…

In the excerpt above, the women managers ensure that the meeting progresses in the intended direction by explicitly controlling and managing the development of the interaction. In this instance, Agnes and Anna are being openly assertive in seeking clarification from Joseph on the state of his division. Agnes begins by summarising, through use of a questioning speech act, what she perceives as the underlying cause of the problem (*Can I ask then, maybe our Marketing and PR is not as aggressive*), and in a way discreetly suggesting aggressiveness as a solution. Anna, in a supporting move, offers advice in the form of a question addressed to the meeting as a whole when she asks (*do* WE *have identity*) a typical way of offering advice used by women (see below). This mechanism calls for more interactive work to challenge than it does to assent to; with the result that respondents tend to produce confirmations of what has been asked in the question. Agnes then launches an attack and goes for the jugular,

an overt power move and asks more directly for purposes of confirming understanding, and with a hint of impatience (*Do you have*? *l*.7 *No you don't have a dedicated marketing team no?* and in *l*.9, *yes and no. It's a no*). Fiona, a member of the marketing team tries to set the record straight by stating that Agnes and Anna are *going backwards*, an attempt to regulate the meeting. Fiona's direct retort is an example of how women interacting as an adjacency pair can be openly critical towards each other, a phenomenon not observed anywhere in the data when a woman is addressing a man. She emphatically states the division's stance as *not defensive*, a move which forces Agnes to re-examine her position and take stock of the discussion and summarise progress (*I am trying to get us to move forward...I am saying do you have a marketing team if not what are you doing about it?*) and she proceeds to give a prescriptive solution (*because that's what you need*), in a turn of 658 words, the longest in all the data. In Appendix A, Agnes as co-chair is noted in two instances monitoring and regulating the course of the meeting as she urges the meeting to (*please slow down l.* 234) as she creates space for a speaker to make a point (*Sorry you wanted to say something l*.141) and checks the progress of the meeting (*So can we have solutions now? l.171*). In the same meeting, James calls the meeting to attention (*can we please have one meeting! L*.103) as participants were observed talking simultaneously.

In the second representative excerpt, Martha (46) who is the chief accountant of the bank, is seen regulating the course of discussion at a bank site and in a boardroom in which there were only two women (out of a total of 12 persons), herself and Julie who is also over 40. Debate over declaration of interest by both management and floor traders had taken up over forty five minutes of discussion time with most participants still wanting to take up the floor and to contribute to the debate.

Excerpt 7b: (Truba Bank: Day 4)		
1.	Doug:	I am saying that there has been some irregularity here.
2.		Interested parties have been sighted as having logged onto their
3.		books various tradings which have not subsequently been
4.		declared and what are we going to do about it I ask.
5.	Martha:	I would like to propose Mr Chair that we park the issue
6.		currently under debate. We have clearly identified that this was
7.		not an instance of insider trading but front running and in my
8.		view we should now stand guided by the compliance people.
9.	Chair:	Shall we move on then. Thank you Mrs Rukuni…

Martha monitors the progress of the meeting by pointing out that the meeting is digressing and makes a proposal that the observed point of front running be noted for further discussion

at a later date. Her remark which is characterised by a politeness strategy (*I would like to propose*) and made in institutional language and the voice of meetings is clearly made to keep the debate on course and one that can only be made from a position of authority. Regulating acts by men also tended to take the institutional format with the chairperson and others sometimes making explicit comments such as *are you happy with IT service and any other question?* meant to check progress as well as serving as a pre-closing sequence and; *I can only talk of investment income here*, as a way of mapping the boundaries of the discussion at a given point during the meeting; *any other lack of service?*, proving openness of the meeting; *can we move on?*, as a way of taking responsibility for keeping the discussion on track and *that's all*, as a closing speech act.

Conversely, younger women in the same meetings were not observed as consistently exercising their authority or position power explicitly through use of monitoring strategies as discussed above, opting as shown in the examples below, to express understanding and agreement, characteristics more often associated, as noted by Holmes et al. (1999), with individuals in subordinate roles.

Excerpt 7c: (WES Co: Day 5)		
1.	Female	Are we saying we want a structure that is suitable?
2.	Male	YES!
3.	Female	Should we not then look at how to build that structure?
4.	Male	Perhaps but that is outside the ambit of this meeting.
5.	Male	I don't think at this level if someone says something wrong, we
6.		should clamp them down. Why don't we wait for one to explain
7.		it?
8.	Female	I agree.

In the meetings that served as data sites for this study, women were perceived as being of equal status to their male counterparts. I want to suggest by way of explanation therefore, that as women have lower social status than men in the wider social context of study, and as relatively less powerful participants in an interaction, they will tend to place themselves below their male addressor. This is an example of hegemony. Instead of stating issues and concerns categorically, younger women were observed in a majority of cases, trying to guide the course of meetings by using the question form but enlisting the voice of the meeting through their use of the inclusive pronoun '*we*' for example, the question *are we saying…?*, was noted six times*, should we not then…?* (5 times)*, and other attenuated forms of expression such as, *how about*…? (8 times) and *would the meeting consider…?* (5 times)*.

Asking questions and verifying answers are linguistic strategies which can be used as a conversation management technique and which can function to construct the ones who monitor talk through any one of the various means mentioned above as holders of power and influence to whom others are accountable. In other attempts to exercise control, women tended to use down toners such as (*possibly*) and the frequent expression of possibility (*maybe*) which epistemically modalised the reformulation to sound tentative. A further example of this can be found in *ll.* 55, (*and then possibly we can look at…*) of Appendix A.

Male managers on the other hand, regardless of age, were observed to use summation and policing techniques routinely as a way of bounding topics to produce clean endings and seek resolution of an issue and to be seen as the drivers of solutions. Examples included statements such as *that's not what this discussion is about…*, as a policing move; *What other strengths do we have…?*, as a way of drawing out information; *can we skip this and move on…?*, as a way of closing a topic which he feels has been exhausted; *we're talking of a staff establishment and we are talking about two things*, as a way of bounding topics.

5.3.7 Reformulation as management of talk

Reformulation is another form of interactional control. Sacks (1972:338) describes reformulation in CA terms as '…an occasion to describe that conversation, to explain it, to characterise it, to explicate, or translate, or summarise or furnish the gist of it, or to take note of its accordance with rules or remark on its departure from rules.' As Sacks' clauses may imply, reformulating of another's talk often has a major interactional control function and can be viewed as a form of policing and regulating the course of discourse as discussed in part above. More precisely, reformulations of gist (see 3.2), where the speaker goes back over or summarises the literal meaning of what has been said by another, is a way of managing talk and controlling interaction. Rephrasing of another's utterance can also be viewed as an attempt by participants to exercise linguistic control, as the power of language has marked value in both institutional and professional settings. It may also be used in a bid to win acceptance from others for their version of what has been said or for what has transpired in an interaction if, as often happens in meetings, the voice of the last or most eloquent speaker is what is put on record and is reflected in the minutes. Through a close study of reformulation mechanisms, the participants in the interaction and the context of the utterance, it may be

possible to observe how the social and hierarchical organisation of any group is built through a close examination of each turn (Sacks et al 1974).

The following extracts taken from various meetings, show how men and women use reformulations to control and to regulate the content and direction of talk in meetings. I point out how both men and women use reformulation mainly to explain a point made by another earlier on and to place their own as the more correct version as they seek to establish their professional identities and expertise.

Excerpt 8a: (Truba Bank: Day 4)		
1.	Joe:	I know there are other ways in which the bank could get a show
2.		of commitment from prospective borrowers. Full loans are clearly
3.		not an option for the bank and yet we stand to lose on potential
4.		client numbers.
5.	Byron:	What Joe is saying is that the banks need to look at ways of er er
6.		lending, rather opting to get borrowers to put forward money that
7.		is not encumbered, a total of about 40% as deposit

Reformulation in this excerpt has been used to summarise the business case as Byron sees it, a linguistic strategy that portrays the speaker who reformulates the proposition of the other, as the holder of expert knowledge. Byron's explicit reformulation (*what Joe is saying…*) is clearly an expression of expert knowledge and power leading to domination.

In another example, Arnold suggests in a long winded argument how the company can outsource computers through a third party which would mean that they do not have huge overheads or the problem of maintenance.

Excerpt 8b: (WES Co: Day 4)		
1.	Arnold:	We know we are having problems with our IT system. We have
2.		talked about this over a number of meetings. The problem as I see
3.		it and as experienced in other companies is of initial purchase and
4.		then maintenance. There is the case of…..We do not want that to
5.		happen here. There are many companies that are acting as
6.		middlemen. Middlemen are not that expensive. Besides we are
7.		also looking at the question of webbing our system. The technical
8.		details could take all afternoon if you like. There is (name
9.		omitted) and (name omitted) and these companies, it is their
10.		business to provide computers as per your brief….. What I am
11.		saying is, these companies are there waiting for business…..We
12.		need to consider the various options and see which one gives us
13.		value…..

| 14. | Jose`: | Let me rephrase that. I think we can outsource computers under ICPS, |
| 15. | | and then we have very good structure. |

Jose` proposes that he can rephrase the utterance made by Arnold. Explaining the utterance of another is a way of forcing one's interlocutor out of ambivalence as Jose` substantially rewords Arnold's suggestion. In this instance, Jose` manages to offer a proposal as well as a solution.

In other noted instances, men rephrased the utterances of women in particular. In the representative example below, the female training manager raises the point that training must be reinforced in the branches and be worked into the key performance indicators (KPIs) of every employee. The HR director then echoes the same point but framed in the language of the particular division as he comments:

Excerpt 8c: (***Truba Bank: Day5***)
1.	Director:	What I am hearing is that the branch managers need to take
2.		ownership of the outcomes of training and make sure that this is
3.		measured using the bank's performance rating framework.

The director's comment was discussed further (field notes), resulting in a resolution being passed that HR was to ensure that the personal development plans of each employee which were lodged with his department, were to be incorporated into their KPIs. Later, during a post recording briefing, the training manager explained how she had tried over a period of time to get the very same suggestion adopted as policy. In frustration she commented:

> *They do that all the time. They are very good at that, reformulating the ideas of others and developing them as their own, and because they are more often than not listened to, they end up going on record as the originators of ideas.*

The comment above supports the observation made by Sacks (1972) that reformulation has a major interactional control function in that some participants can use the linguistic strategy to win acceptance from others for their version of what has been said or what has transpired in an interaction and as a result, be in a position to maneuver the discussion in ways that are advantageous to them.

Although women also reformulated the ideas of others, it was noted that they used the strategy far less and more cautiously compared to their male counterparts. In the one example noted at the Safari Company data site, a woman reformulates the ideas expressed by a male colleague by expressing the idea differently (I *think what Ticha is talking about is a corporate feel*…). This linguistic form could also be interpreted as indicating the speaker's confidence or lack of it, in the truth of the proposition expressed. It could also be taken as an enhancement of the previous speaker's utterance. It is also significant that the woman explicitly acknowledges that the idea she is reformulating is originally Ticha's. This is different to Byron's (excerpt 8a) reformulation in that the reformulation cited above is attenuated (*I think...*), leaving room that she could be wrong and thus saving the face of the other.

In a few other instances, some members viewed pauses by the addressor as an opportunity space for reformulation. In the example below, a male participant views a pause in the talk of a female participant as an opportunity to get onto the floor and to introduce a slightly different angle to the discussion.

Excerpt 8d: (WES Co: Day 4)

1.	Joyce:	I am saying that at the moment we are riding on a
2.		soft interest wave. We've not had this situation
3.		before, where people all of a sudden are earning so
4.		much interest which is being converted into
5.		expendable income and we can see a change in the
6.		spending pattern. The figures for last week are
7.		looking good eh eh ***
8.	Benjamin:	[The point that you are making rather is that the
9.		current interest situation will not last and that we
10.		should rather start making plans for when the
11.		interest rates drop. That's what we should focus on.

Further evidence of women reformulating the utterance of a male colleague drawn from Appendix A (*l.* 89) is interesting in that the woman's reformulation is perhaps more linguistically correct given the dismal picture that the company appears to be in. Where the man speaks of *what is working against us,* the woman reformulates this, to talk about the gravity of the issues *militating against us, Safari Company competing in …* and how *there is need for us to come up with strategies that address that problem...*Reformulation of another's utterance, depending on who is speaking at the meeting, is also suggestive of power differences. Only in one instance in my data for instance, was a junior in terms of role status

or age, observed reformulating the utterance of someone older or more senior (see 5.4.5). Support for this hypothesis has been provided by the research of Zimmerman and West (1975) who also noted that powerful participants will reformulate the utterances of others more frequently than non powerful participants.

5.3.8 Managing time between turns

Yet another differential aspect in the management of talk that emerged from the data was in reference to what happened in the time lapse between one turn and the next and in some instances during a turn. In ongoing conversation, opportunities to speak are often lost as interlocutors wait to pick a moment to enter the floor or get a cue as an entry marker. As Chick (1985) notes, a speaker's background and understanding of turn taking mechanisms may influence the way they get onto the floor. In the meetings observed, it was noted that men tended to speak soon after another's turn or immediately at the end of an identifiable transition-relevant place as the example below, taken from a portion of the meeting where tempers were running high demonstrates.

Excerpt 9a: (Safari Co: Day 10)

1.	M (1):	I have to respond. My body also has to say the same thing. So if I
2.		am welcome to be free with your comments, your compliments
3.		and criticisms, my body should say the same thing, so a lot of
4.		times people say yes…It is a communication thing that is being
5.		put across. Yes I am, I am saying one of your subordinates and I
6.		don't feel free to talk to you and look, I don't feel free to talk to
7.		you full stop
8.	M (2):	Your reasons Sam?
9.	M (1):	No I don't want to talk to eh eh, like I don't want to talk to the
10.		chairman and you are my boss
11.	M (2):	I-I-I look (())
12.	M (1):	[No don't say so. This is me speaking (3 seconds) - (he pauses
13.		for effect)
14.	M (2):	[I disagree with you. If, if you will if you fuel…
15.	M (3):	[We agree
16.		about not fuelling rumours, we are trying to cut it down.
17.	M (4):	Let me say, tell you if we allow rumours at this level I will say
18.		you are wrong…
19.	M (1):	[Ah uh - I am not saying…
20.	M (4):	[Low level, low
21.		level yes, yes at this level I think we should be killing rumours…

The debate continues in much the same vein. A quick take up of a turn by men often signified disapproval or disagreement offered very directly, highlighting the polarity between the previous utterance and the speaker's proposition.

In five other instances in the selected data, male to male exchanges took on the form and character of a staccato as male interactants took up turns in quick succession and sought to be heard, a conversation strategy more commonly associated with men. As a result there was a display of aggravated forms of confrontation often resulting in disfluent formulations (*I I I look*), line 11, (*If you will, if you fuel*), line 14, (*let me say, tell you*), line 17, (*low level, low level, yes, yes*) line 20-21, as they asserted or defended their positions. Disfluent formulations noted elsewhere in the selected data where men's turns followed one after the other in quick succession could be interpreted as signs of anxiety, nervousness or anger.

In addition, it was observed that men tended, as was also observed by Kramarae (1981), to speak or reinitiate discussion after a pause however it occurred, more frequently than women. This was noted in 23 instances. A pause of more than two seconds can signify an element of discomfiture, hesitation, contemplation or simply lack of interest in the topic of discussion on the part of the addressor. The longer the pause the less certain participants become of the next course of action or direction of discussion. The result was that men used these lapses to introduce a new topic and women initiated talk after a long pause less often. As a result, women lost a number of opportunities to take up turns. Pauses within a stretch of utterance also proved problematic especially for women as they hesitated for a moment after a pause or as they looked for the right word. It is important however to note that it was not only women who hesitated and lost turns this way. Altogether, there were 32 noted instances of men hesitating in their speech (compared to a total of 44 instances by women) as they looked for the right word or thought of how best to align the idea, and out of these, losing eight turns to other men. In five of the eight, the person who took the floor was older than their interlocutor and in the remaining three, it was their equal. Woods (1988) conducted a study to test the same hypothesis. Though her results were not particularly striking, there was corroborating evidence that males tend to speak after a pause more frequently than females and that males in high occupational positions tend to speak more often after pauses compared to their male subordinates.

The excerpt below shows how a turn was lost, and a new angle to the topic introduced, as the holder of the floor hesitated and groped in search of the correct terminology in between a turn and subsequently lost the turn. The excerpt simulates how turns were lost by both men and women.

Excerpt 9b		
1.	Simon:	Let's perhaps create the worst scenario that can happen
2.		to this bank. If say the governor of the reserve bank
3.		decides to eh eh as indeed he will have been advised, to
4.		raise the eh eh…*** (*pauses for 4 seconds as he tries to*
5.		*recall the correct term)*
6.	Taku (M):	Repo rate ya? Then I believe we would
7.		find ourselves in a bit of a situation. Look what I am
8.		saying is that we need to exercise some caution by
9.		looking at our high margins on lending especially when
10.		it comes to corporate lending.

In this example, the colleague Taku, who assists with the correct term, usurps the idea and develops it as though it were his original thinking as he emphatically says, (*Then **I** believe),* and directs the meeting to *Look... **I** am saying*.

5.3.9 Length of turns and floor management

Length of turns, how long one can speak for and successfully hold the floor in conversation management is associated with expertise and confidence in the value of the proposition being tendered. Edelsky (1981) cites a number of conversation management strategies that can be constructed and used variously to increase one's hold of the floor. These include substituting the one argument with another, giving a historical perspective to the issue at hand or citing numerous examples in support of a line of argument, a kind of extended detour. All in all, it emerged from the data, the observations and ethnographic detail noted on site that men held the floor for much longer than their female colleagues. For example, in Appendix A, page 3-4, James holds the floor for three minutes and twenty seconds as he uses a number of conversation strategies as referred to above, to extend his argument and stay on the floor for an extended period of time. The strong and overriding effect of gender was noted most significantly in reporting/review type meetings where all board members had an opportunity to present their departmental reports. It came through markedly that men held the floor for the greater part of the first half of most meetings and speaking on average for more than three

minutes. It was also noted that on average, men contributed more, both in terms of the number of turns taken and the number of words uttered. There were however differences and contrasts: there were quieter men and more participative women. Nonetheless, women's turns in similar meetings tended to be shorter, an average of 2:15 minutes. This is however an approximation and should be treated as such as the numbers of men were not equal to those of women and the chairperson and consultant, by virtue of their position status, tended to speak for longer periods of time compared to the rest of the participants and this would distort any attempts to calculate average speaking times based merely on gender.

In many instances too, women preferred to read (people read faster than they speak) or refer to their notes closely, a phenomenon widely observed and explained in the FGDs as necessary to avoid distractions and ensure accuracy of detail. This however eliminated the opportunity for expanding on the subject of discussion. Women felt that until such a time as they could confidently play in corporate space and hold the floor assertively despite interjections and other forms of floor gaining tactics, they were safer reading from their notes or referring to them closely (FGD respondent, Winnie). This as a result, affected the length of the 'turns' they took.

5.3.10   Turn completion in conversation

Another interesting feature of turn-taking which constitutes a feature of conversation management and one that warrants discussion in this study is turn completion. In discussing turn completion, I also include examples of turn yielding due to interruption and discuss why women gave up their turns. Men and women had in some cases similar and in others, different ways of completing or yielding a turn. In the analysis of the selected data, women were noted yielding 26 turns in different ways. Eleven turns were yielded to the next speaker by the female turn holder allowing her voice to trail off as she says *I think the solution is~~~* (Appendix A *l.* 231). Five turns were yielded by women when the speaker turned to a participant sitting next to them and in the middle of a turn asked a question (…*how do they do…?* in Appendix A *l.* 219), searched for the right term or started a side sequence as exemplified below and that way, allowed others to complete the turn for them. The excerpt below is taken from a meeting where the collections department was the focus of debate as the company's narrow profit margins was the main issue tabled for discussion.
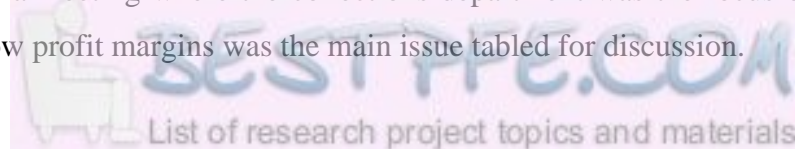
Excerpt 10a: (*WES Co: Day 6*)

1.	Sophie:	What I am saying is the collections' department needs to er er
2.		(*She looks to Peter sitting to her left and says loudly 'whets*
3.		*the word I am looking for?'*)
4.	Peter:	Synchronise, synchronise their debt collection strategies.
5.	Sophie:	Yes I mean synchronise those strategies. I mean we cannot
6.		have the different divisions each calling up an account on the
7.		same person all at the same time. If the system indicates that a
8.		customer is falling behind with their er er
9.	Peter:	Scheduled payments,
10.		then what we need to do is …… (and *he takes over the*
11.		*explanation of what needs to be done and Sophie yields the*
12.		*turn to him*)

The excerpt above also serves as an example of how the majority of women tended not to use business technical terms as much as men did. This was caused by the apparent lack of comfortableness in using technical terms. Sophie's hesitation in *ll.* 1 and 8 are explicit requests for help which demonstrate that when women appeared to struggle for the correct term or sought to organise their thoughts, they tended to lose the floor. In the first instance, Sophie is able to redeem her turn (*Yes I mean synchronise those strategies*) in itself an example of backtracking, only to lose the floor altogether after the second hesitation. Seven turns were yielded by women through allowing interruption either because they hesitated in search of the right term or as in two of the cases observed, they fumbled with their papers as they spoke face down and the rest were lost due to the general excitement in the room. As observed by Coates (1986) women, more so than men, also chose not to fight for the floor when it was contested and gave up their turn after a short overlap and allowed their co-interactants to pursue the matter to conclusion. In another meeting at WES, this phenomenon was observed six times in the one meeting. In the FGD's, women were indignant about the show of disrespect represented in some of the floor contestation strategies and commented on how men waited in the wings to appropriate the ideas of others and exploit them as their own. Women were also noted for frequently not completing an utterance and leaving the final forms of the utterance unsaid, a kind of invitation to the addressee to conclude their thoughts for them. The example below, drawn from a meeting where the ratio of women to men was 3 to 7, is a case in point.

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Excerpt 10b: (**WES Co: Day 2**)

1.	Judy:	I was actually thinking that this is an instance of the type of
2.		demands that most customers and visitors to our showrooms
3.		often make. I mean…(( )) (*she shrugs her shoulders and*
4.		*continues to speak but in a low tone) at which point Brian*
5.		*comes onto the floor and completes the sentence for her)*
6.	Brian:	We have experienced an upturn in the kind of demands that our
7.		clients require as a right now. And we have to play to, and try
8.		and meet their demands almost or else they go to the next
9.		showroom down the road. I reckon we need to present a bigger
10.		and more attractive and inclusive package at each point of sale.

The verbal behaviour noted above could have been influenced by women's notions of cooperative talk where the last part of the utterance is co-constructed by the speaker and the addressee, as part of a social contract which accommodates back channelling and the co-construction of utterances, which Brown and Yule (1991:92) describe as indicators of support for the speaker and a strategy used in support of the colleague on the floor. The addressee is thus compelled to complete the utterance of the other so that she co-constructs the speaker's intentionality and that way, common understanding is acknowledged. It has been argued that this kind of talk is a typical feature of women's speech style in conversation which is more manifest and clearly understood in all female conversations as discussed more fully by Cameron (1985) and Coates (1988). In the boardroom however, as noted above, apparent failure to complete an utterance, resulting in the sharing of both turn and floor, often leads to women becoming susceptible 'to being labelled shallow, socially immature and struggling' (FGD respondent, Tigere). In addition, acceptance of another's position or opinion on the 'ideas market' can be mistaken for submission as the assenter is viewed as accepting a subordinate position regarding the argument or dispute. This is what another FDG male respondent (Chisha) had to say:

> *If my colleague begins to sound like she needs help then hey, a*
> *gentleman steps in (laughter)*

Men, it was clear, misunderstood the purpose of this female linguistic behaviour and took up the opportunity to develop the point as though it were their own. The idea of opening up an office in Kenya discussed extensively in Appendix A is a case in point. Fran (F) indirectly introduces the idea in *l*. 110 which is taken up by a male in *l*. 159 who reintroduces the idea as a topic solution, (*an opportunity*) and in *l*. 185 the idea is explicitly expressed and owned by another male who suggests the opening of an office in Kenya as his original idea (*Let us*

open an office in Kenya) and asks if there is anything stopping the company from opening up in Kenya. Women therefore often had ideas appropriated from them in similar ways and re-expressed by more forceful individuals often male, thus losing a claim on their ideas and the opportunity to go 'on record'. One female FGD respondent, (Maina), had this to say:

> *They (men) have a way of grabbing other people's ideas and making them*
> *sound like they were the originator. I know this one guy who will just raise*
> *his voice above everyone else's when he senses there is mileage to be gained*
> *by the expression of an idea that sounds good and the chair allows it!*

Women on the other hand, when they developed further or completed a contribution made by a colleague, clearly attributed the contribution to the originator of the idea as demonstrated in Appendix A *ll.* 422-423 where the woman suggests that *maybe the reason why we are not going after these issues 'as **he** is saying' is because…*

5.3.11 Summary of findings on conversation management with respect to gender

The results of the study showed that when the two power bases of gender and occupational status were at work, then gender tended to exert the greater influence on floor apportionment, more so when there was little disparity in perceived status. When age or role status was a factor, as in the case of the accountant, chair or the more mature women; floor apportionment was less gender dependent. What also seems to emerge from the data is that the jobs speakers do and the goals they pursue in any interactional encounter will affect how talk is organised and managed and determine what speaker rights each one is able to claim through the different turn taking mechanisms used. The data also seems to suggest that in boardrooms where men and women participants are supposedly equal, men still manage to organise the interaction in ways that allow them to dominate the floor. Women and men were overall observed as having different interactional strategies of managing conversation.

Below is a summary of my findings of how men and women used or did not use a range of linguistic features and discursive practices in relation to conversation management, which resulted in the shaping of gender identities at the four data sites where top level meetings

were recorded. In analysing the findings, it must be kept in mind that in all the captured data, women were outnumbered 44 to 23 and in some cases, this imbalance will have influenced the findings. The summary is divided into the different categories applied to the description of conversation management above and in corresponding order.

Entry strategies as expressions of intent

As part of entry strategies, men and women were observed using different performatives and pre-sequencing moves as a way of packaging information and projecting how this would be put across. Men were noted using explicit and bold speech acts to state their intention as they entered the floor while women tended to use attenuated persuasive moves which rendered their entry strategies less powerful. It was also evident that men coded their information and sought to categorise it as recognisable chunks of discourse while women, with the exception of those who were older and more experienced, generally failed to recontextualise information as institutional knowledge or to use pre-sequencing moves to prepare the ground for their exposition.

Self-selection and selection by others as turn management

The way in which men selected themselves in a bid to take a turn emerged as a significant variable in the management of conversation. Men claimed speaking rights boldly while women tended to use politeness strategies and conventional formality to gain the floor. Men were also observed selecting other male colleagues to enter the floor by calling upon them directly or selecting by gaze, which resulted in men gaining more speaking time in meetings.

Interruption as a floor management technique

Men were also noted dominating the floor and therefore controlling talk by, for instance, interrupting the speech of others more frequently than did women, thereby exerting greater influence during talk-in-interaction. It was noted that men often used this strategy to steer the course of discussion by interrupting the argument of another and to bring in their own argument as more legitimate, or as a way of setting the record straight. Women, on the other hand, rarely interrupted the turn of another speaker, male or female. Moreover, where they did interrupt successfully, the age of the woman was a significant variable, as the more

mature women were more successful at interrupting the talk of others. It was also noted that as one of the tactics of interruption, men tended to raise their voice amplitude to speak above everyone else. They were also observed marking the beginning of a turn or overlap with emphatic markers, whereas women tended to use politeness strategies in asking to take a turn or negotiated a turn through forms that mitigated the force of their ideas.

In instances where there was more than one speaker speaking at a time, it was often the voice of the male which prevailed and the women were more likely to back down and 'allow' men to take over the contested turn. Women appeared to view simultaneous talk in some instances as a constructive and collaborative venture, where men interpreted it as open competition.

Topic control as a floor management technique

The differences in the way men and women handled conversation were more marked in the way they managed topics of discussion or attempted to influence what was debated in meetings. Men, it was observed, managed conversation more successfully than women, by controlling the course of discussion through the way they often introduced their own topics, thereby violating topical coherence. They also ratified topics in certain instances or changed them by introducing divergent lines of argument. Women on the other hand, played a less dominant role, seemingly preferring to build on each other's contributions, supporting and chaining their ideas and thoughts by the way they overtly linked them to those of previous speakers to arrive at jointly developed meaning. Women, more so than men, also tended to use gradual topic shift, developing topics more slowly and accretively and avoided using the exclusionary skip-connect strategy often used by men to link their speech and ideas to those of a preferred male colleague. Women also avoided competitive talk, a characteristic feature of the talk of many men. They instead, openly offered support for the talk of others by means of minimal responses with the result that they participated more actively in talk-in-interaction. These instances of cooperative talk amongst women which tended to occur towards the end of meetings, developed into recognisable speech enclaves with their associated advantages. That way, women tended to take on a listening role at the beginning of meetings and towards the end of them, came up with more solutions to the issues and problems which emerged from these gender networks.

Monitoring talk as a conversation management strategy

On the topic of monitoring and managing the flow of conversation, a function closely associated with the construction of power, men took up a monitoring and policing role and managed ongoing debate by, for instance, asking guiding questions, verifying decisions and monitoring and policing debate. This was evident in the way they used summation tactics or made critical and challenging statements to push their own agendas or solutions, while women, by sounding tentative through the extensive use of down-toners and expressions of probability, subsequently failed to exercise their authority and power more fully. Other strategies that men and a few older women used to manage conversation, assert themselves and control the flow of meetings included the asking of questions, checking the progress of the meeting or regulating its flow - linguistic strategies which functioned to construct the one who employed them as the holder of power and influence.

Reformulation as management of talk

With regard to reformulation, a linguistic strategy used mainly to explain a point made by another, or to position one's own articulation of the idea as the more correct version, men routinely reformulated the speech of others in a bid to regulate the content of discussion and, as a result, the direction of the argument by manoeuvring the debate in ways that were advantageous to them. In this regard, it was also noted that men, in a large number of cases targeted mostly the utterances of women. Women, on the other hand, were observed using reformulation far less often and more cautiously and, when they did, they explicitly acknowledged the source of the utterance or idea being reformulated. Women also tended to attenuate their reformulations to save the face of co-interactants, male or female.

Managing time between turns

In analysing how men and women managed the time lapse between one turn and the next, it was evident that men managed more often to take up turns and in quick succession and that these were characterised by aggravated forms of verbal confrontation. Men were also observed, in the majority of cases, reinitiating discussion after a pause as they often seized this opportunity to either introduce their own topics or to usurp the ideas of others and to develop them as if they were their own. The younger women on the other hand, lost their

turns more often after they paused to answer a question or to listen to a comment or as they struggled for a word or the correct terminology. They were also generally slower in taking up turns or initiating talk to their advantage during a pause or when the person on the floor faltered.

Length of turns

The average length of the turns taken by men and women was another differential aspect in the way talk was managed in the boardroom. It emerged from the data that men took more turns in the earlier stages of meetings when ideas were formulated and they held the floor for longer periods than women as they substituted one argument with another or cited numerous examples in demonstration of their expertise. Women on the other hand took shorter turns and in some instances they preferred to read from their notepads, which limited the opportunity for giving fuller explanations and to respond more directly to what was being said.

Turn completion

Women more so than men, were observed 'allowing' men and other women to complete their utterances for them. They also permitted and encouraged back channelling which can be used as a strategy for seeking consensus from co-interactants as they 'invited' the addressee to conclude their turn, a form of collaborative floor management strategy common among women-only groups. Women also frequently failed to complete utterances and, in turning to a colleague for assistance, they lost their turns and tended not to contest the speakers who seized them. Men tended to seize the opportunity to complete the turn of another as a chance to develop more fully the point made by another speaker to their own advantage as they then neglected to explicitly attribute the point to the original source.

5.4   Self-presentation skills in meetings

5.4.0   Introduction

In this section, I begin by discussing what constitutes self-presentation in meetings as defined briefly in 1.5 and 3.6. In the analysis that follows, I examine and discuss the different ways in which men and women presented themselves in clearly observable ways as this emerged from the data. As discussed in Chapter 4, I use, for the most part, the analytic tools and concepts from pragmatics for my analysis and interpretation. The descriptive titles of each category derive largely from the sources that inform this research, and more specifically from Cameron et al. (1992), Fairclough (1992), Goffman (1971), Sarangi and Roberts (1999), West (1995) and West and Zimmerman (1985). The titles also emerged partly from my intensive engagement with the data.

Self-presentation as a concept refers to the way participants strategically manage themselves in an encounter by attaching their own personality to their message and intent. When professionals interact, they need to be careful to build and strategically manage their professional credibility. This credibility depends on the appropriate, effective and authoritative display of that knowledge.

Sociolinguistic studies focussing on the behavioural characteristics of men and women (Tannen, 1990; West, 1995) have noted the inherent prejudices and assumptions that men and women have of the other which can affect how they view each other and how they communicate. As discussed in 2.11 above, self-presentation, how one projects oneself in an interaction process and views others, is largely affected by the subtle teachings of one's culture. Self presentation is also largely governed by how one perceives oneself and this in turn influences the verbal behaviour of the interlocutors. In the workplace therefore, the dynamics and complexity of how people perceive each other are of vital importance as this has a direct bearing on the nature and interpretation of the interpersonal communication that takes place in the front stage (Goffman, 1959), where impression management is crucial.

Self-presentation can be expressed in many ways, from choice of lexical items, a personal demeanour, style and voice projection, and is often accompanied by what Sarangi and

Roberts (1999 term a biased presentation of 'the other' vis-à-vis a discourse of self-competence. In high-level meetings, competent performance, which is often a display of professional experience, complimented by accumulated experience and positive self-presentation has to be interactionally managed moment by moment as participants negotiate and validate their professionalism, role and social status, expertise and personal style. In such meetings, the rhetoric of self-presentation tends to promote what Fairclough (1993) terms a promotional discourse of the profession and status. It follows therefore that in high level business meetings, participant's contributions are calculated accordingly and positioned for best effect. In essence, self-presentation involves how speakers strategically present themselves and others in a particular light as they authenticate their status and contribution in a setting framed by the 'other'.

The aspects of self-presentation I discuss here have been grouped into themes. The titles which identify each category as discussed above, were not chosen arbitrarily but were identified as representing the way in which people in meetings construct an image of themselves through how they speak. Interactants speaking in public spaces portray a particular image of themselves by making their authority and power in relation to others quite explicit. This can be achieved through explicit strategies such as carefully exploiting the different modes of talk and by how determinedly one speaks and conveys the knowledge one holds by claiming the ownership of ideas through how one attaches oneself to the idea. Interactants can also decide whether they wish to present themselves in a leader or support role as they take definite positions in problem solving situations and are careful to uphold the face needs of their co-interactants through a number of strategies which are discussed below. The last category dealing with paralinguistic features highlights some of the subtleties of the boardroom environment. In the discussion of each excerpt, I look at how interactants, men and women, present themselves during talk, and then give an interpretation of each aspect noted and comment on its significance to the interaction itself and more importantly on how what they say and do impacts on the message itself and on co-interactants.

5.4.1 Modes of talk as a form of self-presentation

One feature that clearly distinguished the way women and men present themselves in meetings was the modes of talk that they used in meetings. Hall et al (1999:301) describe how talk is consciously organised by drawing on a number of modes of talk used by speakers to 'validate the performance of certain role expectations, […] terms of authority and competence' in making a particular contribution. Four major modes of talk were identified as prevalent in the text. These are type/token reasoning, descriptive, narrative and cause and effect. What could also be regarded as modes of talk are the deterministic and voluntaristic modes of talk as discussed by Roberts and Sarangi, (1999:25) and these will be discussed separately in a subsequent section and is to do with manner of speech.

The first mode of talk that I discuss is type/token reasoning. According to Hall et al (1999:297), the type token mode of talk refers to how aspects of a single isolated type (case) are treated as tokens in the light of incidences or occurences cited elsewhere. Roberts and Sarangi (1999:66), who also refer to this mode of talk, point out further, that this type of talk draws on the notion of evidentiality as it is used to discuss professional knowledge in a way that establishes the authority of an argument. This was noted as an important discursive strategy which professionals used to authenticate their argument by referring to well known cases. The type/token mode of talk is in many ways similar to what Garfinkel (1967) refers to as the documentary method of interpretation, which is based on the notion that instances are better understood in relation to well known or well documented occurrences cited elsewhere and the isolated single case is treated as indicative of a pattern. The type/token mode of talk therefore generally involves the typification of a case through the use of rhetorical devices such as drawing similarities and contrasts or detecting a form of pattern employed to lend support to a particular point of view or argument in critical sites where expertise is displayed. In addition, the type/token mode of presentation of subject matter and self is a way of re-contextualising an argument or point of debate as one uses material in one context to make formulations in another. This then constitutes additional situational context which, as referred to in 2.5 above, can be used in meetings to present an argument and to create possible scenarios that both listener and analyst can use to guess at speaker meaning and read into talk. The type/token mode of talk is also used by co-interactants as a speaker in contexts such as the one under study, may wish to position him/herself as the holder of extensive knowledge.
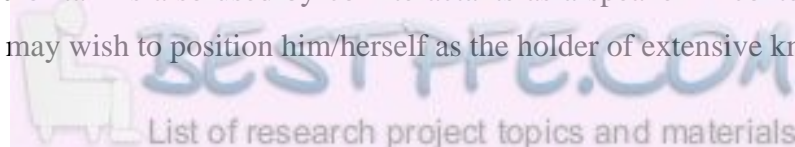
Drawing from the representative excerpt below (part of Appendix A), I discuss how men and women present examples as a case in point. The analysis below is based on a strategic planning meeting held to negotiate the way forward for a company that is looking to improving its image in order to become a member of the International Standards Organisation (ISO) as well as to regain its position as the number one Safari operator on the continent. There is however, concern over how this objective can be achieved at the lowest cost possible. As this is a strategic planning meeting, all members are free to make contributions and to raise, argue and reason out issues.

In my analysis of the excerpt below, I focus on type/token modes of talk, to examine 'how women and men say what they say' to formulate and situate their contributions to best advantage. The excerpt was drawn from a point in the meeting where the debate was getting heated as members presented contrastive scenarios of the kinds of reputation the company had once enjoyed and the demise it was facing now. For purposes of discussion and easier reference, this long sequence has been divided into two excerpts.

Excerpt 11a(i) Safari Co day…		
1.	M1:	I think what we should be looking at is the the the perception
2.		that the customer in the first place has in the source markets
3.		about Safari Company
4.	F1:	Yes that's what I'm saying…
5.	M2:	So the customer is born in France for
6.		example born in Italy or in UK they look at Safari Company as
7.		a group. It used to be one group. They would make one phone
8.		call in the London office and they would book Africa **(uhm)** it
9.		would be your people into Kenya and Southern Africa and the
10.		whole thing is distributed**.(uhm)** Now they make a phone call
11.		and there is no one around to answer the phone call **(uhm)** and
12.		then the clients that have been booked in Kenya and the whole
13.		thing has failed there and they might have something in South
14.		Africa and they might have something in Zim but what they
15.		know is the the marketing office em the MD the group MD's
16.		office does not exist. The office that was in Philadelphia is no
17.		more. The office that was in France is no more. I I can't see
18.		anyone not saying this thing has failed because it has and I
19.		think to get it right we need to realise the thing has failed and
20.		failed in a big way (**uhm**) in the market or in the place where it
21.		matters the most (**uhm**) in in Zim so (( )) the hotels see us
22.		there, they still know the company is there, is owned by
23.		whoever (**uhm**) but who are they.? They only give us rates. We
24.		need the customers to have confidence and (**uhm**) the
25.		customers know Safari Company as a big brand (**uhm**) that

26.		brand is not there anymore and had all this infrastructure that
27.		they they they that gave them comfort you you want to book
28.		Africa as a domestic call away. You want to pay Africa as a …
29.		it's a cheque that you sign without going for Reserve Bank
30.		approval because it was all in the same market. **(uhm)** Those
31.		things don't happen anymore **(uhm)**

Excerpt11a(ii) Safari Co

1.	Chair:	Sorry you wanted to say something
2.	F2:	I was just going to add on to what Eddie has just said that uh
3.		perceptions on the international market are reality. Just as
4.		much as you want to run away from it its there, its life **(uhm)**.
5.		More often than not now with the great deal of what has
6.		happened in Kenya, you find clients writing to us and saying so
7.		who to use in Kenya we have used Safari Company before and
8.		now what do we do? Now you have to go to all these lengths of
9.		explaining what has happened to Kenya and refer them back
10.		maybe to Safari Company France for them to go back to
11.		somebody in Kenya and ask them to provide the services **(uhm)**
12.		so in that process somebody else would have woken up and
13.		dealt with the client **(uhm)** and we are over and done with. By
14.		the time we go through all those processes yourselves and try to
15.		compete with the competition, the client is taken **(uhm)** and
16.		more so there could be some other agents in Kenya **(uhm)** who
17.		have got relationships with other agents here in Zimbabwe
18.		**(uhm)** and they go to speak to the agents and talk and discuss
19.		and finalise their rates **(uhm)** and in the meantime you are left
20.		behind **(uhm)** and this client will also tell other clients what's
21.		happening within our company **(uhm)** and we lose business in
22.		that way **(uhm)**.

The excerpts above exemplify how two co-interactants, a man and MD of the company and the other a woman (Felicity), and projects manager, use the type/token mode of talk to present their ideas to best effect as they draw on knowledge which is not only the overt display of learned facts but an account of accumulated experience. The two, each in their own way, construct a business scenario which is intended to suggest an interpretation of how the company could lose out further on business if the situation prevailing is not corrected. In this excerpt, they are using type/token reasoning to present, confirm and ground their argument. They use both lexical and grammatical features to construct local meaning together and connect it to wider knowledge sets and the experiences which frame them.

The MD presents the case study (type) of Kenya as indexical. What happened to the Kenya office and operations could very well happen to them. He sets the background field to the current problem. Speaking with sanctioned authority deriving from his position as MD, he

picks up from a point he assumes everyone is aware of (referred context) and which serves as the token; *So the customer is born in France for example born in Italy or in the UK*). He then presents a dramatic version of the state of affairs by referring to how things were in the past. By presenting his argument through use of type/token reasoning and referring to the source markets, the MD wishes for his audience to draw a comparison between what is happening now and what happened then in the light of a patterned form of operation, for them to fully appreciate the situation the company is in. The size of the business then and the magnitude of the operations are clearly presented by the use of contrast when reference is made to *the whole thing* now having failed. He presents his argument with sentimental appeals being made about the Philadelphia and French offices (token) being no more and if these are no more then it follows that all overseas Safari offices are no more. Mention is also made of infrastructure (type) that used to exist and that made Africa an all inclusive holiday destination that gave them comfort … *to book Africa as a domestic call away…without going for Reserve Bank approval*. He tails off by presenting a passionate appeal of how those things *don't happen anymore*. Type/token reasoning has been used extensively to lend support to the MDs' point of view and his interpretation of the situation that, if the Kenya office, which was the centre of the African tourist market is no longer on the source market's tourist map, then it follows that even the Safari company, being part of *the whole thing* is also in a dire situation. The verdict passed on Kenya can be re-contextualised in the predictions and formulations of the present. Often in situations of professional and institutional discourse, assumptions about normality and generic practices are regularly invoked and presented as background where it is believed that instances are better understood in relation to patterns that existed and which may appeal to their experiences of related cases so as to help identify the instance under discussion as not typical or normal, but some kind of deviation. This way, the MD presents himself as the custodian of institutional memory.

Felicity (F2) on the other hand presents her view and herself differently. She begins by minimising her contribution (the generosity maxim) through the self- effacing strategy inherent in the hedging (I *was just going to add on to*…) which is a possible outcome of gender-role socialisation, and then enlists the MD's voice and proceeds to reformulate the problem having recognised it as one of perception. Incorporation of a former speaker's voice into one's own as a presentation strategy lends authenticity to the speaker's argument. Felicity further strengthens her line of argument through a range of rhetorical devices. In *ll.* 6 and 7 reported speech is used to enlist the voices of the potential clients (*We have used Safari*

Co before and now what do we do?). Use of a rhetorical question in this context brings the problem to the immediate and begs an answer. The description of the process of attending to clients, queries and concerns, which in itself is an example of type/token mode of speech, is presented in such a way as to make it sound laborious and tedious (*a process*) and thus reinforcing the problem at hand.

The issue is more clearly articulated and presented as Felicity builds in an element of assessment of what would happen if somebody else were to move in (*we are over and done with...the client is taken*). Where the MD's argument is a historical one, explaining how things used to be, Felicity repositions the argument, presenting it as an imminent challenge to the Safari Co. She accomplishes this by typifying the problem through an analogy, how events such as have happened in Kenya have a potential to impact negatively on their company. The possible existence of other agents in Kenya could result in the loss of business *...and we are over and done with*).

Though both the MD and Felicity are using the same discursive mechanism in advancing their own perception of the issue at hand, they are using diametrically different action sequences in presenting it. The MD, by virtue of his position, displays competent knowledge about the company that he directs and he enacts his role as he traces the history of the company and adopts an aerial view of *the whole thing*, wishing to deal with the situation completely, while Felicity, whose field is project coordinating, prefers to present an analysis of the problem at a more local and practical level, a characteristic feature of the speech of women noted elsewhere in the data. Even though she offers no solutions, through deductive logic, fostered by type/token reasoning as mode of talk, the observations of Kenya, though anecdotal, are treated as indicative of patterned failure. Kenya has been used to index a typical assumption about bad business practice generally. On closer examination, it can be detected that Felicity has shifted the problem from being global as perceived by the MD and presented it as one that needs closer attention at home. She has repackaged the problem into abstract categories that facilitate and depict efficient problem solving. She however gives up her turn before she outlines how the problem can be sorted out, thus allowing others to formulate solutions already suggested, though not so overtly by her. Other instances of type/token reasoning were noted when examples of what has happened elsewhere in China, Nigeria, South Africa and other companies within Zimbabwe itself were noted as

indexical/similar instances to the scenarios that were discussed in the various meetings recorded.

Excerpts 12a and 12b above could also serve to show role differentiation in critical sites of professional encounters, as both MD and project manager demonstrate their role status and skill.

The second mode of talk that was evident in the meetings analysed in meetings is the use of narrative. Use of narrative in conversation is explained by Roberts and Sarangi (1999:500) as a way of strategically managing one's professional reputation through the use of experiential narratives presented as evidence to establish a case. The link between evidentiality and professionalism can be seen in the way that women work up a narrative to construct an account in support of an argument. In the meetings recorded, 10 brief narratives were by women, as opposed to two by men. One typical example of a historical narrative is given below:

Excerpt 12a(i): (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	Mary:	Last year when we went on a road show to Europe, we made
2.		appointments with various stakeholders and we had meetings
3.		with them and tried to reassure them about the situation in
4.		Zimbabwe. We took a lot of photographs and posters and after
5.		these initial meetings we then attended the Tourism trade shows
6.		with a better idea of the questions we were likely to be asked.

In the same meeting, a male colleague clearly rejects the tendency to reminisce in meetings and presents himself more forcefully.

Excerpt 12a(ii): (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	Ben:	I don't want to go into historical events. From the historical
2.		side, there are still strengths. I am fine with that. This company
3.		has strengths. Those are what we need to play more and more.
4.		This is who we are, this is where we are and move on.

The tendency for women to use the narrative form was manifest throughout the data. It was not uncommon for the narratives to begin with the typical time sequence markers for example, '*Last year at conference…*', while most of the narratives were experiential as women narrated how they or the company *experienced the same last year when…*, or remembered some incident which they related to anchor their argument. While the narrative

form might be the expected structure in recounting experiences and the giving of information linked to the past, the men in contrast, were observed as primarily taking up the explanatory mode, interpreting and giving possible explanations for the point being discussed without resorting to giving an account of events.

Men and women also differed in their use of the descriptive mode of talk. The descriptive mode of talk is explained by Sarangi and Roberts (1999) as talk where the speaker gives a detailed account of events and incidents by selecting appropriate descriptive terms and lexical items. This calls for what Van Dijk (2000) refers to as the 'descriptive adequacy' of lexical choice with respect to the institutional context concerned, which implies that participants in an interaction must necessarily use the discourse of that particular institution to give a full and relevant description. In this regard, there were noted gender related differences. Women were observed quoting fewer figures in description and employing a more creatively interpretive style while men preferred to use a more matter-of-fact mode which made them sound more precise and direct in the way that they presented themselves. Two brief examples demonstrate the case in point.

Excerpt 12c(i): (ODT Insurance Co: Day 2)

1.	Freda:	The police are doing what they should not be doing. I phoned
2.		through to report the incident and he was saying 'we do not
3.		work for you and you do not even give us a thank you.' We are
4.		having problems with certain people at the top with high
5.		connections. We haven't lodged a claim. He wants to do it
6.		himself. You can guess what that means. So we are left with a
7.		situation where we are having to wade our way through the arm
8.		of the law.

It is important to note that words like *corruption, bribery* and *kickbacks,* which is what the excerpt is about, have not been used directly (an example of female tact), with the speaker preferring to use the direct speech of the police officer in reporting the incident (*we do not work for you…*) which is a metaphoric description, and not an example of descriptive inadequacy, used to illustrate the underhand way in which cases are being handled by the police. In addition, the number of, or names of the individuals concerned is referred to only as *certain people*. Freda is applying the cooperative principle of conversation by assuming that the hearer understands speaker meaning. The example below serves as a stark contrast in mode of speaking as in commitment to topic.

1.	Enoch:	I note with concern that the accident claim of Justice….
2.		[omission mine] has not followed the right channels. I am
3.		afraid to say this is becoming a very disturbing trend in our
4.		company. I would say about 25% of all claims are being
5.		handled this way. Why are we choosing to expose ourselves this
6.		way? I mean preferential treatment. We are not even in
7.		possession of the so called wreck of a car and we know for a
8.		fact it was not him who was driving the car at 3:00 AM. The
9.		police report says so. What was he doing out there anyway
10.		(laughter) Come on guys we need to get a handle on things. Our
11.		reputation is seriously at stake.

In this excerpt, typical of younger males in my data, diplomacy came second to the demand for the exact details and veracity of the report. The name of a high court official was mentioned without compunction, an estimate of the extent of the problem given as *25%* and the details of the case held up to public scrutiny (*we are not even in possession of the so called wreck*) and factual reference made (*and we know for a fact it was not him driving*) and the official in question is held to ridicule as the time of the accident (*3:00am*) is by implication viewed as a misdemeanour for a man in such high office. This manner of speech would be in keeping with the Gricean maxims of quality, quantity and manner of speech.

The fourth mode of talk referred to by Thompson (1996) as cause and effect, did not emerge as a significant gender marker as both men and women deftly used the important labels of logical dependency as grammatical descriptions of cause and effect. The following terms, *Because of, because and therefore* were used to emphasise causality; *although, nevertheless and despite,* to mark concession; *assuming, if and in that case,* to mark condition were used in the creation of coherence in talk text. What was apparent, however, was that the use of these markers was more frequent in issue and problem-solution type meetings.

5.4.2 Deterministic and voluntaristic modes of self-presentation

Two other modes of talk, which differentiated women from men, were the force with which speakers presented and navigated their ideas. In discussing this concept, Sarangi and Roberts (1999:25) refer to deterministic and voluntaristic modes of talk as a manner of speech where one either sounds certain or uncertain of one's proposition. Sounding deterministic can be further explained in speech act terms as the illocutionary force of the utterance which would

result in the speaker coming across in conversation as being explicit, committed to one's idea, being forceful, precise, decisive and authoritative. Sounding voluntaristic in conversation on the other hand, refers to speaking with less commitment to the proposition being made and is linked to affiliative and collaborative strategies adopted for the purpose of sounding agreeable and accommodative with the aim of reaching a common decision.

As claimed by Bourdieu (1977a), what happens to an idea on the 'ideas market' depends crucially on the kind of language in which it is framed. As discussed below, ideas in meetings can be put across in a number of ways. They can be stated assertively or they can be passed on in a non-forceful, non-committed and non-threatening way. Interlocutors can also try to map out their ideas by combining interactional dominance with some measure of affiliative strategies such as showing deference and signalling respect or eliciting other's support, which are linguistic resources that encourage cooperation. Ideas can also be posed as a suggestion in the form of a question which then often takes away the force of the idea. Alternatively, interactants can choose to position themselves *vis-a vis* the idea being expressed (idea positioning) and/or, vis-à-vis the others with whom they engage in talk-in-interaction (subject positioning). In discourse contexts of an uncertain or conflicting nature, interlocutors can therefore choose to use one or all of the strategies noted above to help them present their issues to best advantage.

The texts that I discuss are taken mainly from a strategic planning meeting involving senior management personnel mapping the way forward for a company keen to meet certain standards for it to be awarded an ISO certificate. The extracts demonstrate a participant structure involving interlocutors with distinctly opposing views and goals. In the first extract, the man James, who is the company's operations manager, adopts a deterministic position as he lays down decisively and authoritatively his expectations while the woman, Norma, who is the company secretary and cited in the second extract, and speaking towards the end of the meeting, (when those who believe they have more important things to say have had their say), takes on a more voluntaristic mode, offering choices and alternatives as she in turn tries to influence the course of action going forward. The data corroborates the views expressed by Tannen (1990), Coates (1988) and Schick Case (1988) and others that men tend to speak more forcefully and determinedly to push a view they believe to be right while women will have a tendency to take the more affiliative middle-position, offering ideas and allowing

others to ratify them for them. The excerpt is taken from a discussion near the end of the meeting which has been lengthy, animated and inconclusive.

In the sample data that follows, I focus on the manner in which James strategically exploits the tentative situation they are in for the furtherance of his own objectives and purposes.

Excerpt 13a: (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	James:	We are not talking about the mess we had in March
2.	Consultant:	Ok before March - from March your mess is supposed to
3.		have been sorted out. Let's talk from March to now.
4.		What differences.
5.	James:	It was. It was sorted out. It was defined. We realised (03)
6.		we then embarked on processes to correct it. Those
7.		processes are on going. Wh wh while they are on going its
8.		its they are not going to happen overnight. (uhm) ISO on
9.		its own takes six months to a year to implement this eh eh
10.		before you get certification and then certification is not is
11.		not actual implementation as well. There is
12.		implementation or there is. You now have systems that
13.		people have to to make the difference but the market does
14.		not wait the one year that you need to be ISO and ISO is
15.		not everything in itself. To me its a process it's a
16.		management tool it's a way of doing things I want to see
17.		the result on the certificate, I want to see people doing
18.		things better …better yah but the market wants to see
19.		good vehicles for example you are talking about Hertz
20.		that if they have the right car today they move. Its one
21.		thing to suggest. We need to find the the money
22.		ourselves. We failed to find the money. There are reasons
23.		that happened or that caused that. If the business is not
24.		given a jump start they may, we may not find we may not
25.		live long enough to then implement all … we … to
26.		resource ourselves (uhm) and generate the money from
27.		within ourselves to create a future for us.
28.	Stella:	I think that's why we are here. If the business needs to be
29.		given a jump-start, I think it needs to be justified
30.		and that's why we are here. We have to convince
31.		everybody beyond a doubt that it is what's needed.
32.	James:	Is there ANYONE (*spoken with emphasis* as *he looks*
33.		*around to check*) who is not convinced by ….
34.	Consultant	Sorry can we move on. You wanted to say something.

In this except, James begins with an emphatic statement of what the debate is not about (*we are not talking about the mess*) a situating and mapping of his argument expressed in a direct and non hedged form. He resists attempts to revert to the problems in March, as the consultant seems inclined to do. He ardently explains how *it was. It was sorted out. It was*

defined to remind his colleagues that the problem has been taken care of and changes are in progress. Because it was defined, it is now by implication under control. But the process is not going to happen '*overnight*'. James is keen to show his clear expert knowledge and understanding of the ISO system, which will take six months to implement before a certificate is issued. He points out with a touch of irony, that certification is not implementation. James speaks determinedly as he suggests that ISO is not everything in itself, effectively employing connotational subtleties to say what he means without doing so "in so many words". James reiterates the point made earlier about ISO certification *being a process... a management tool...a way of doing things* uttered with marked force that James achieves through his use of repetition which could be intended to show that he has a clear understanding of the concept. By re-inscribing himself (*To me... l.*15), he makes his position unequivocally clear. James speaks authoritatively and emphatically and his tenor in this structure is oppositional and intransigent, expressed in bald unmodalised statements (*I want to see the result on the certificate, I want to see people doing things better, better yah...*). The repetition of *want* and *better* is for marked emphasis. James's next argument about buying a new fleet of cars functions as a rejection of the proposal made earlier. The overriding thrust of expert commentary (*We need to find the money ourselves*) and particularly on the way forward expressed as a conditional phrase (*If the business is not given a jump start*) is in a way intended to legitimate his bald rejection of the proposal on cars and to serve as a strategic placement of his particular objective which is that the company ought to *generate the money from within ourselves to create a future for us.*

Stella, not wishing to challenge James's point directly and recruiting his voice about the jump-start, gingerly suggests further debate (*I think that's why we are here*). Her hesitation marked by the hedge (*I think*), and possibly fear to offend is further couched in the use of the inclusive pronoun we *l*. 3. The use of the inclusive pronoun in this excerpt is complex. This could be an attempt by Stella to make herself appear part of James' proposition (subject positioning). Stella could also be attempting to restore a sense of unity to the group after the many challenges posed to them by James or she could be using this as a way of paying attention to the addressee's face and in part, confrontation avoidance (discussed later in 5.4.8). The meaning potential of the construct (*we have to convince everybody beyond a doubt*) is that a number of people, possibly herself included, are not totally convinced. Use of the passive voice (*it is what is needed*) again removes her from direct line of confrontation, perhaps an effort to save her own face. James retorts by quite forcefully 'inviting agreement'

by his compelling question (*Is there ANYONE who is not convinced?*) at which point Stella is rescued by the consultant who suggests they move on. James' retort is a good example of how relatively powerless participation in an interaction will receive relatively little attention and may actually cause damage to face, and may actually cause damage to face as can be deduced in this instance.

In the example immediately below, the women, like Stella above, display elements of voluntaristic modes of talk. In each case, they are offering suggestions through recognisable interactional tentativeness as they proffer different proposals.

Excerpt 13b: (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	Norma:	I wa I was going to propose that maybe when we look at this
2.		(( )) why don't we look at the factors that are inhibiting our
3.		ability to compete globally as as of now and then possibly
4.		then we can look at the solutions.
5.	Faith:	And can we also eh eh consider which eh offices we are
6.		looking at in this global market that we know that there is
7.		Safari co in South Africa we know there is Safari co in
8.		Zambia those two and eh …

Norma is here observed speaking in the past continuous tense (*I wa… was going to propose*), and sounds tentative and not sure of herself, (*that maybe*) and not insisting that her suggestion be discussed right away (*when we look at this*) and mutters something to herself (( )) then proceeds to offer her suggestion in the form of a question with part proposition (*why don't we…*). In this participant structure, Norma, by not being explicitly committed to her idea is clearly seeking collaborative support from others of equal professional status. By using the deictic inclusive pronoun *we*, in conjunction with the down toner (*possibly*), Norma reduces her degree of responsibility for the value of the proposition which has the effect of rendering the utterance voluntaristic, less forceful and more acceptable to the hearer.

Faith gets onto the floor by latching onto Norma's contribution, a strategy commonly used by women (and demonstrated more fully in 5.3.5 above), thus indirectly signalling ratification of the latter's proposition. Speaking more cautiously (*eh eh*), and also inclusive of others (*we also…*), Faith's lexical choice in her use of the verb *consider*, in suggesting which offices to target, urges her colleagues to survey the alternatives available and that way, collaboratively come up with a strategy. In being cautious and perhaps fearful of outright rejection of her

idea, her voice trails off as do the ideas she meant to express – a missed opportunity for visibility and appearing 'on record'.

In many other instances, women were observed presenting themselves in non-forceful and non-threatening ways. One other typical example drawn from Appendix A is discussed below.

Excerpt 13c: (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	Margaret:	Also another great route that we might take instead of
2.		opening an office in Kenya, is to identify a company
3.		where we will, we can use as eh- on a strategic alliance
4.		local basis so that if people are booking, they do a one
5.		call like Africa-how do they do~~~ (*Looking around in*
6.		*search of the correct term) and ignore when they are*
7.		*going to use us.*
8.	Boyman:	[That's the point I'm really into.
9.		I'm not saying practically lets go to Kenya and open our
10.		own. I'm just saying (*he turns in the direction of*
11.		*Charles who spoke two turns before this*) if you have
12.		got 2000 people phoning about Safari Co in business,
13.		we might end up having a person dedicated to dealing
14.		with Safari Co Kenya. In a way you don't make income
15.		from it. If you are able to see that you make money
16.		from this like what he is saying umm, (*he turns again in*
17.		*the direction of Charles, who spoke two turns before*
18.		*this,*) he is trying something to deal with somebody.

Margaret in this excerpt presents her ideas tentatively. She generates a cogent alternative solution to the problem at hand but as an appendage (*also another great route*), thus tying it to the preceding suggestion by a male. Elsewhere in the data, women regardless of age or status, as the data includes one lady chairing and the other acting as consultant/discussant, clearly favor suggesting moves, commonly realised by the linguistic element *let's*, which a number of analysts (e.g. Tannen, 1990; Coates, 1996; and Eckert and McCinnell-Ginet, 2003), have suggested is in keeping with the notion that women work to constitute an egalitarian society. Men were on the other hand, observed using direct imperatives that build hierarchies like *tell the organizer of the function that there has been a change in plans...,* *alternative arrangements must be made..., we must be sure they will deliver...* Goodwin and Goodwin (1987), and Goodwin's (1990) ethnographic work with African-American children in Philadelphia in which he found out that males engage in task oriented speech acts that

build hierarchies can be cited in support of this observation. Twenty one other similar instances of the use of *let's* as a linguistic marker of request were noted in other contexts.

As another example of the level of tentativeness displayed by women, Margaret outlines clearly how the Kenya office would operate and in the middle of her presentation, falters and slides into an aside (*how do they do…*), an appeal for help in developing her point further, before her voice trails off and she gives up her turn, which is taken up by Boyman. He proceeds to re-articulate and at the same time usurp the point made by Margaret by boldly claiming *I think that's the point* I AM *really into*, a ploy associated with men elsewhere (and confirmed in the FGDs in 5.5 below), and characterised by use of the first person (*I*), which as noted in 5.4.4 below, is used to constitute power out of talk, while Margaret like the other women in the data, prefers to use the consultative *we,* to sound inclusive of others at the risk of sounding relatively powerless. Women also use linguistic forms which tone down the force of the proposition thus allowing for other views leading to the joint working out of a group point of view as illustrated in 5.4.5 below.

The excerpts above show how women and men in the context of uncertainty, in particular indeterminacy of strategy, advance their own position in debate over best practice, as they enter a new work order, that of seeking to become ISO certified. They are clearly uncertain about its scope and processes. The data illustrate how women evidently try and minimise their own point of view possibly because of their uncertainty of how the idea will be received or in consideration or deference of the originator of the idea being debated. This mode of behaviour and self-presentation could be viewed as an outcome stemming directly from socialisation prescriptions where:

> *black women in most cultures on the continent are encouraged to sound*
> *tentative for fear of offending their men folk by sounding certain and*
> *confident of themselves* (FGD respondent).

Men on the other hand, tended to turn this uncertainty to their own advantage by being more explicit and precise in expressing their intention. Men thus came across as more knowledgeable and more capable because unlike most women, they do not give up the high ground of their professional expertise thanks to the decisive and authoritative manner with which they say what they say, while women emerge characteristically as appeasers wishing, unfortunately at a cost to them, to sound agreeable and to reach a consensus. As Coates (1993) claims, speaking powerlessly means that one is regularly paying attention to the face

of others and may in the process cause damage to one's own face resulting here in women having less relative power than men even of equal ranking with them.

Women were also observed failing to present themselves determinedly, tending to signal disagreement only indirectly, often refraining from defending their position and opting to offer compromises and give in to men's positions, as the example below illustrates.

Excerpt 13d: (WEC Co: Day 1)

1.	Fiona:	I am talking about coming up with and listing a number of
2.		products that we can offer our clients, making it a one stop shop
3.		so that when the client calls, we can attend to say; his insurance
4.		enquiries, his licensing, if he intends to change ownership of his
5.		car or gain permit papers for cross border travel and a host of
6.		other innovative ideas listed here.
7.	Mart:	But at what cost to the company? Are we not loading ourselves
8.		trying to impress the client? Do we have the capacity to carry
9.		all this? And think of our current economic climate
10.	Fiona:	Well maybe if you look at things that way but what I was just
11.		trying to get across is that if we say we are number one in the
12.		industry then we must strive to stay there and show why and
13.		how we are number one but if you do not think all these ideas
14.		are good or worth considering then I don't know. Maybe then
15.		we should wait a little.

After making a logical contribution about a one-stop shop for their clients, Fiona, when challenged by Mart, fails to make her point crisply, starting off by partially conceding that Mart could be right. Her use of the linguistic marker *well* is a clear indication that she could be persuaded to think otherwise and that, coupled with the double conditional phrase (*if maybe*) leads her into using an apologetic tone (*I was just trying…*). Use of the word *trying* in itself suggests she is acknowledging the weakness of her initial argument nor is she sure that indeed she believes her company is number one. She then slips into self doubt signalled by the word *but* and verbalises her fears that her ideas may not be *good or worth considering* (*l* 14) and gradually she tails off as she suggests, unpersuaded, that her idea could *wait a little*: compromise at its worst.

As stated in the introduction to this subsection, presenting ideas, however significant, as questions, was noted as another strategy that can be described as voluntaristic. Questions in interaction can take on many forms. Brown and Wragg (1993) discuss extensively the different functions of questioning. A question can request information not known to the

speaker. It can be used to seek confirmation of information that the speaker is uncertain of. Questions can also be non-direct advice giving, hypothetical, information retrieving or an elicitation strategy amongst a host of other functions. In the data, it was observed that in a number of instances (a count of 33), when women had an important point to make, the idea was often put forward and presented in the form of a question, while men were more direct, unambiguous and declarative thus overtly claiming ownership of the ideas expressed. The excerpts below demonstrates how women used voluntaristic discourse to position their ideas in management meetings and the exposition will be followed by a brief discussion of the fate of the idea.

Excerpt 13e: (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	Roger:	Can we really say that the brand is bad? Is that an accurate eh
2.		assessment eh…
3.	Ruth:	That's a perception (*everyone talking at*
4.		*once*)
5.	Dorothy:	But how about the major players, the major tourism players
6.		who bring the tourists into Zimbabwe, the ones who do the
7.		trades move or host the trade shows? What is their opinion?

In the ongoing debate about the brand name of the business, Roger, unconvinced by the earlier argument uses the double checker (*really*), a kind of expression of personal opinion and value judgement, to ask a very bald and direct question that in effect queries the veracity of Ruth's statement. Ruth defends her position though weakly and in a low tone of voice (field notes) as *a perception*. Dorothy, who has been subdued up to this point asks a question about *the major players, who bring the tourists to Zimbabwe…but how about the major players* which depicts her keen understanding of the problem under discussion and one that she has seemingly analysed. Her question as Lakoff (1973) puts it, is markedly conversational and serves an important interactional function, that of drawing other parties into an exchange and doing what Hirshman (1973) and later, Fishman (1978a:404) defines as 'more actively engaged in ensuring interaction than the men' through features such as asking questions, in itself a talk facilitation task. Her open-ended question (*What is their opinion*) is intended to open the floor for further debate. Other examples of women making contributions in the form of questions and therefore sounding voluntaristic are drawn from the 'whole' data. The questions however illustrate different functions.

- *Can I ask then if you are not referring to the rumoured merger of...,* (which is a question posed to generate further debate as the addressor already has an idea of the expected reply).

- *-I've somehow heard that you are saying HR-right?* (which is a question expecting a yes or no reply but one used as a lead).

- *Is this not a typical question of how we ought to position ourselves on the tourism market?* (which is a question making an evaluative assertion).

- *Can we not conclude then that our campaign has not worked as well as we thought it would?* (a statement posed as a question and making an evaluative assertion).

More often than in the case of men, women made declarative statements which were again weakened by the questions grounded in the preceding statements that followed, as the examples below demonstrate.

- *There is a limit to what HR can recommend* (assertion)...*can we perhaps come up with strategies...?* (Question)
- *This company is not getting it right (*assertion) *Is our marketing aggressive enough…?* (Question)
- *We have to come up with workable alternatives (*assertion*) Have we looked at the reverse of what might actually happen if the dollar continues on the free fall?* (suggestion question).

Again as stated in the introduction to this subsection, presenting ideas, however significant, in attenuated form, was noted as the third differential aspect in the way speakers position themselves in relation to the idea or opinion they express. It was apparent, as indicated in bold in the example below, that women in the boardroom were constrained to soften and attenuate their expression of fact and opinion to sound neutral through such devices as the extensive use of hedges, conventional politeness and amplifiers such as *only*, *quite*, *generally* to mention a few items which were not so manifest in men's speech. As managers present and express certain viewpoints, propose certain plans, query certain ideas and make certain moves in meetings, they are obliged to take positions which they express through various linguistic forms. As pointed out above, interactants can position themselves *vis-a vis* the idea being expressed and/or vis-à-vis the others with whom they collectively and collaboratively discuss and develop meaningful discourse through the way they modify ideas as they take account of

the other (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003). These discursive positions are closely linked to cultural contexts and social situations and are constitutive of speaking as a woman or a man. The examples below, serve as a case in point.

Excerpt 13f: (OCT Insurance Co: Day 1)		
1.	F:	I **think** that we **ought** to respond to the allegation, **perhaps**
2.		not in the media but find a way of letting the public know
3.		that we were being labeled wrongly.
4.	M:	But what would be the point of that?
5.	F:	I **mean** it **could** be a worthwhile strategy to face the public
6.		and let them have the facts
7.	M:	Where has that ever produced desired results?

Excerpt 13g: (Safari Co: Day 6)		
1.	F:	This issue of whether we should try out tours into the rural
2.		areas **really** depends on what new markets we are trying
3.		out.
4.	F:	If as you say there is or **might** be a potential market for this
5.		kind of package, I **might** actually be persuaded to agree that
6.		it **might** be worth trying out but of course we do need to get
7.		some guarantees beforehand.
8.	F:	You are **probably** right there. We also need to do a dip
9.		stick test with **perhaps** tourists who are already in the
10.		country, a **kind** of additional treat for them and then gauge
11.		their reaction and responses.

The extract above also illustrates my view that women tend to exploit the polysemic nature of modal expressions in their presentation of facts and opinions. According to Coates (1995), 'epistemic modals are defined semantically as those linguistic forms which are used to indicate the speaker's confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed in the utterance'. In the excerpts above, the women use modals to mitigate the force of their utterances in order to accommodate the addressees' face needs. Consequently the words marked in bold above hedge the propositions being made, possibly not because the speaker doubts their truth but because she might be sensitive not to offend her addressees by assuming their agreement. As Coates (1996) points out, such forms also protect the speaker's face. The speaker in *l. 9* can retreat from the proposition made there if it turns out to be unacceptable. Where potentially sensitive topics are discussed, epistemic modal forms are used frequently to neutralise the proposition made there. These forms are also used to facilitate open discussion and allow other points of view. Another function of epistemic modal forms is that they can be used to invite others to speak, a function often fulfilled by women as they take on the role of what Fishman (1980) terms facilitator of conversation. Throughout the data, it is evident that men

comparatively tend to make more direct declarations of fact or opinion than do women, including suggestions. Examples of statements of fact or opinion made by men include utterances such as (*I want to say that there are things happening within the Insurance industry that I would rather not know about…*), (*I don't want to talk to you about it because you are my manager...*), (*That is wrong, actually irregular in my opinion...*), (*We cannot market ourselves for what we are not...*), (*Let's be honest and say we have failed*). As men presented facts and opinions more boldly and directly, their contributions were taken note of and debated more extensively and their recommendations were taken up more frequently as was reflected in the record of the minutes of meetings that I had access to.

5.4.3 Self-presentation through an overt display of 'knowledge'

One very obvious mode of self-presentation and one linked to power play in meetings is an overt display of 'knowledge' and expertise. As discussed extensively in Sarangi and Roberts (1999), knowledge at the workplace is manifested in a number of ways but more importantly during the process of formal and systematic rationalisation of control, employed in the course of planning in most bureaucratic organisations. Viewed from this angle, professional authority and credibility is equated with the acquisition of a body of specialist knowledge and becomes visible as professionals exchange knowledge and information, and position the same in specific ways. Such discourses, occurring as they do in the front stage, as Goffman's (1959) metaphor implies, have an element of the set piece. To the observer-analyst, the front stage, in this instance the boardroom, is where professionals play out their expertise in asymmetrical alternations and based on differing expectations, emerge with new and often enhanced images and identities as what and how they say what they say has value potential beyond the utterance itself.

There are different ways in which expert knowledge in meetings is drawn on and how professionals, both women and men, use various structures and organising elements to construct and legitimate their display of knowledge which in turn validates their authority. Brief examples and descriptions are drawn from throughout the data. Quality of information given was noted as one strategy that those wishing to position themselves as experts on a given topic adopted. Both men and women, and more markedly those in finance and distribution were notably more concerned about the detail and accuracy of the information

they gave, preferring to read their reports and make constant reference to statistical data to support their opinion. Another stratagem used to appear knowledgeable in meetings was in the way certain individuals both framed and referenced their contributions. A typical example was in the following contribution by a recently appointed female bank manager who was anxious to prove her worth and that she was not merely a candidate of affirmative action (common view raised in FGD).

> ***I*** *am going to give you a brief outline of the HR figures split into various categories which will help you see the cause of the concern that **I** am about to raise before this board. **I** have shown the spreadsheet to Dr Mudenhe (The newly appointed regional executive) and he agrees with **me** that this is one area we need to attend to urgently...*

This is an example of a female manager who evidently has a good understanding of human resources issues. Framing and referencing of information as in the example above renders it more authentic (FGD respondent, Marlo). The woman is evidently making sure that the contribution she makes in the meeting is attributed to her through the interplay of the use of the first person pronoun (*I*) three times in a 65 word utterance, the assurance of her own actions (*he agrees with **me**]*), and the appropriateness of the reference to the regional executive. This form of talk was noticeably evident at the bank site through pronoun use (marked above in bold and discussed in detail in 5.4.4 below) as men and women alike, clearly set about defining their areas of responsibility and authority. In other instances, women more so than men, were anxious to prove their credibility and ensure acceptance of the information they presented by referring to earlier discussions held outside of the meeting with an individual who is highly regarded in the organisation as the utterance below, uttered by a different speaker from the one above illustrates.

> *I have discussed this with Dr Utete prior to this meeting and I hope he does not mind my saying so here (laughter) and let me say that at the time he agreed with me (she chuckles.)*

This is an indirect but deliberate way of demonstrating one's expertise where the power holder strategically refers to a third party whose opinions are known to be respected, to channel their information through to the targeted audience. It is interesting to note how she seems to imply an off the record discussion and agreement with Utete as emphasised by the use of the words *at the time he agreed with me...*

Density of information and the inclusion of technical detail were also used as ways of overtly delivering expert knowledge. Men more so than women, were noted for their concern to provide evidence of the point being made. Statements such as *I have the figures to prove that..., I can present the evidence...*, were used to back statements made with hard facts. Evidentiality of any information given in these meetings appeared to place the giver of it in good light and for the information to be regarded as legitimate. All participants, albeit some more than others, strove to demonstrate their expert knowledge as an exercise of power as they all vied to get things done the way they wanted them done and influence decisions. Pienaar and Spoelstra (1991) explain this stratagem as 'information power' (see 2.9) when the holder of expert knowledge intends that it is highly valued and the way the information is packaged and presented subsequently makes a large impact on outcome.

An interesting observation was made with regards to the use of technical lexis in certain sections of discussion. Right across the data, it was observed that regardless of gender but more in keeping with age, some participants who were notably older than the rest and may therefore have risen through the ranks as opposed to through graduate programmes, showed a marked deficit in the way that they demonstrated a limited use of technical terms when they discussed issues requiring specific definition. The two excerpts below demonstrate the case in point.

In excerpt 14a, the man holding the floor is middle aged, and is the company secretary in an insurance company. The technical terms he could have used are bracketed.

Excerpt 14a: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 3)		
	(Annotation provided by one of the younger men, an economics graduate as part of member- checking)	
1.	Thomas:	I think that we in the insurance industry are going to be
2.		affected by what is happening out there. Investments by private
3.		individuals (*private equity deals*) have recently increased and as
4.		you all know, these deals decrease the barriers to ownership and
5.		cause (*companies to be highly geared*) because the deals are funded by
6.		borrowed money. A large amount (*a significant portion*) of the money
7.		(*private equity funds*) is used for growth (*to buy assets*) and the
8.		increase in the amounts that companies are spending on assets (*capital
9.		expenditure*) will mean that more of our children will get jobs on the
10		market (*lead to increased employment*).

In the second excerpt, a much younger woman aged 29 is an accountant and working at the bank site. The difference in terminology is evident as the woman uses clearly, the language of the profession while the company secretary uses a more descriptive type language which is less technical.

Excerpt 14b: (Truba Bank: Day 5)		
		(*Annotation provided by one of the young man, an economics graduate as part of member- checking*)
1.	Marlo:	What I am saying Madam Chair is that emerging economies
2.		with wide current deficits such as Zimbabwe came under
3.		pressure in the first half of the year as investors opted for less
4.		risky markets. Zimbabwe's deficit on the current account
5.		reached a high of 6.4% of the gross domestic product in the first
6.		quarter of last year.

In layman's terms and descriptive language, the same text immediately above would read as follows:

Countries that are starting to participate in the global economy and whose total imports exceed its exports were not favoured by investors, preferring instead to place their money in more mature markets. Given this background I think we should err on the side of caution and choose the investors that we are going to back up …

5.4.4   Pronoun use in self-presentation

Use of pronouns in one's presentation in meetings also emerged as a significant variable in the way men and women spoke. In high-level meetings where an organisation's resources are regulated, problems are solved, identities are played out and professional knowledge constituted, participants seek to place their contributions in relation to who and what they are. Goffman (1974) argues that attribution of social structure cannot be taken for granted without paying attention to the structuring of participation in a given situation. In other words, who we become in an interactional order is not a given but is actively produced and managed. In management meetings therefore, participants, as observed and as emphasised within ethno-methodological and conversation analytic studies, will constantly define and redefine themselves as part of ongoing interaction. The encounter then becomes a socially complex production as interactants take account of each others' co-presence and contributions to position their own ideas significantly. In negotiations, participants either speak for themselves as both source and transmitter of message (Goffman, 1981) or they take on spokesperson roles where they subsume in what they say, other's interests and views.

Considered use of pronouns is one way of stamping one's identity as well as of claiming ownership of ideas. Pronoun use is therefore clearly linked to how participants structure their contribution and present themselves; whether they wish to sound inclusive of others, refer extensively to 'the other' or speak independently of others, thus constituting power out of talk.

The following extract is drawn from an audit-type board meeting during which heads of divisions are giving quarterly progress reports and mapping the way forward for their units. In the excerpt below, I focus on the manner in which the more mature women act contrary to Hirschman's (1973:436) earlier findings that women in general show a greater tendency to use the pronouns 'you' and 'we' in their speech. They instead speak more confidently and sound both in charge and in control of their operations, emerging as powerful individuals. Use of the first person singular in speech can connote assertiveness and strength of character and can be interpreted as a show of power, expertise and authority on the subject. Incidentally, the example below is taken from a report given by a woman who was voted the company's divisional manager of the year in 2003.

Excerpt 15a: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 1)		
1.	F:	Thank you Mr Chairman as you have read from my report **I** am
2.		**I** think collecting quite a lot of money as compared to my first
3.		report in January. **I**'ve done six market visits namely ZIMRE,
4.		INTERMARKET, SURREY, TOTAL GLOBAL and, NICOL
5.		DIAMOND and **I** have just had a good response from most of
6.		the insurance companies with the exception of Eagle who are
7.		giving me headache. **I**'m almost phoning them on a daily basis
8.		because they are not giving me the service that **I** need. Ahm
9.		so what **I** have done is **I** have asked the accounts department to
10.		hold any cheques that are due to them to give us the recoveries
11.		money. As you can see from my figures my cash flows last
12.		month **I** collected \$122 million and this month **I** managed to
13.		collect \$371 million. On the 3rd party, claims referred to debt
14.		collection, **I** had a meeting with Mr Chanayiwa yesterday and
15.		there is little progress coming from them as **I** am unable to get
16.		communication from the 3rd parties. **I** only managed to get
17.		payment of \$200 000 dollars which they are going to forward to
18.		me at the end of the month and my general comment is that **I**
19.		think **I** am cleaning up the recoveries and **I** 'm hoping to clean
20.		it to the last cent. Thank you Mr Chairman.

By presenting her report in the first person singular (17 times in a 230 word presentation), the female manager confirms that she is in direct control of operations and that she heads the division which she is here to represent. As she is not *getting the service* that she wants, she is having to phone them on *a daily basis*, and overall, her debt collection figures have risen from *$122m to $371m* and she is *cleaning up the recoveries* and *hoping to clean it to the last cent*. This is a clear demonstration of legitimate power (see 2.9), where the speaker is able to influence the course of action and decision because of position power. Compared with the presentation of a much younger female manager, the difference is obvious. Thabani (28) begins her presentation in a manner very different from that discussed above.

Excerpt 15b: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 1)		
1.	Thabani:	In March **we** will be opening two branches one in
2.		Gweru on the 19th and on the 26th **we** will be going to
3.		Mutare. **We** will have **our** function at Plymouth hotel
4.		and also at Holiday Inn. **We** have received two
5.		agreements from the venues that are going to be used.
6.		What **I**'ve done is **I**'ve advised the people who are
7.		supposed to be attending the functions through…

At this point the Chairman takes over and proceeds to direct the course of the report through the question and answer mode. This, in CDA terms, is a typical example of dominance jointly produced (Van Dijk, 1993a) where the woman, who happens to be among the youngest in the boardroom, accepts dominance and as such, acts in the interest of the powerful of her own free will, a concepts discussed earlier in (3.10) It is noteworthy that in a meeting in which the majority of managers begin their presentations with the institutionally appropriate voice of meetings (*Thank you Mr Chairman*), Thabani plunges head-on into her unframed information without reference to the abstract rules that serve to categorise information into recognisable and auditable events. She also shows an inclination to use the first person plural pronoun 'we', which explicitly acknowledges the existence and contribution of others in her department for whom she is in this instance spokesperson and does not therefore carry full accountability for the propositions made therein. Frequent use of the pronoun 'we' in high level meetings can connote a sense of appeal for acceptance of the idea and can therefore render one's contribution less than expert. Even at this late stage in the making of arrangements, Thabani is still talking about suppositions as she refers to the individuals that she herself has nominated to attend the opening ceremony.

Some of the younger male managers also appeared uncertain about their propositions and expert knowledge and as a result failed to present themselves positively and firmly or to become positioned with regard to their contribution. Indeterminacy in talk is often realised at the microlevel by the speaker shifting alignments as realised for example in the deictics of 'we', 'they' 'you' and 'I' which may be a reflection of the speaker's concern for the identity that he or she wishes to assume during that particular phase in the conversation.

The excerpt below was typical of the way several younger male managers presented themselves, despite the fact that much of the I/we alternation in the use of pronouns can be justified on semantic grounds. They would often shift between different power positions, as did the younger women. The change of pronoun from we to I in *l* 12 is interesting in that here we see a young male manager make a self conscious shift which could be evidence that he is anxious to take accountability for his department.

Excerpt 15c:		
1.	M:	Ughm thank you Mr Chairman ( ) **I** will start off with
2.		Bulawayo. **We we** are right on schedule on our data capturing.
3.		Should be through by the 28th of February. That's the assurance
4.		**I** got from the Regional Manager. **We** are currently working on
5.		linking up with the service where Mr Sibanda is the head but
6.		right now, **we** are getting the training and exposure from these
7.		other guys after hours ( ) **We** are going to set up permanent
8.		accounts in Mutare and Gweru at a cost of $47000.00. Usually
9.		(.) they are the cheapest according to **our** devaluation branch
10.		um ah Vanessa and Charuma were trained on premiums last
11.		week. **We** are compiling a list of reports that comes from free
12.		mail. **We- I** am going to circulate that report so that people put
13.		down their comments if there are any reports that are missed
14.		there **I** would expect people to put in their requests so that **we**
15.		put them on the calendar **we** will be able to produce this report
16.		within the fortnight …. (Voice tapering off) **I** think that's all **I**
17.		have.

Use of the concluding speech act (*I think that's all I have*) and in particular the use of the epistemic modal *I think* connotes the speaker's lack of confidence in himself and in a sense the substance of his delivery.

5.4.5 The support versus leader role

Linked to the idea and subject positioning strategies of women and men, is the issue of how participants offer support to one another and the roles they assume in contexts where

perception of the other determines the value attached to what one says and whether or not a proposition put forward is ratified. In meetings, which are an organisation's official 'ideas market' (Bourdieu, 1977a:271), issues are introduced and discussed, ideas picked up, verified by co-interactants, pursued, repeated, acted upon or dropped by the participants, depending primarily on who introduces the idea, how it is presented and who picks it up. Topic support systems are not always built around equal rights and obligations for all participants. Some participants will position themselves in the leader role while others support both the topic and the individual introducing the topic. Ratification of topics therefore appeared an important variable in the way how debate was conducted. I chose to discuss this issue of leader/support role under self-presentation and not under conversation management as it was evident in the data that the fate of a topic was closely linked to how it was presented and who presented it. In this regard, men were observed taking greater control of discussion as well as issuing more explicit directives and speaking more confidently in support of a point during debate whereas female participants as observed by Coates (1988) tended to present themselves as willing to play a more facilitative and supportive role. As a result, their conversation techniques around the presentation of their ideas and control positioned them as primarily supportive interactants.

The three excerpts below demonstrate how men introduce an idea which is explicitly supported by a female colleague, notwithstanding the fact that most go on to offer their own views, and also how men will often bypass the line of discussion to reiterate what was said by a male colleague or to introduce their own topic, a strategy used to present themselves as originators of ideas in contexts of power play.

Excerpt 16a: (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	Chair:	Sorry can we move on. You wanted to say something, you
2.		wanted to say…
3.	Giles:	[I wa I was going to propose that maybe when
4.		we look at this (( )) why don't we look at the factors that are
5.		inhibiting our ability to compete globally as as of now and
6.		then possibly then we can look at the solutions.
7.	Gillian:	And can we also eh eh consider which eh offices we are
8.		looking at in this global market that we know that there is
9.		Safari Company in South Africa we know there is Safari
10.	Gerald	Company in Zambia those two and eh …
11.		If I may just come in here, our offices are scattered across the
12.		country and at the moment we have logistical problems when
13.		it comes to fast and efficient communication. The point that
15.		is, we need to look at those factors that are inhibiting the

| 16. | | company from claiming a share on the global market. That in |
| 17. | | my opinion is the way to go. |

In the excerpt above, Giles takes on the leader role explained above as he proposes that they look at the factors inhibiting the company's ability to compete globally before looking for solutions to the current problem of the company needing a jumpstart. The word propose (*l*.3) suggests the action he would like to see taken, in itself an attempt to introduce a new topic. Gillian, while appearing to align her thoughts with Giles' orientation (*and can we also…*), and therefore offering him support, makes a suggestion that while they *consider which eh... offices they are looking at in this global market* referred to by Giles, they should come up with a list of the offices first (*there is Safari Co in South Africa, we know there is Safari Co in Zambia-those two and eh*). Her idea is to find solutions at the local level first, before the company looks outward but she positions it in such a way that it sounds as if the idea belonged to Giles. Gerald in turn, picks up the point made by Giles and supports the idea of going international but this idea ends up as his opinion.

Excerpt 16b: (Safari Co: Day 7)		
1.	Eddie:	I can't see anyone not saying this thing has failed because it
2.		has and I think to get it right we need to realise the thing has
3.		failed and failed in a big way **(uhm)** in the market or in the
4.		place where it matters the most **(uhm)** in Zim so (( )) the
5.		hotels see us there, they still know the company is there, is
6.		owned by whoever **(uhm)** but who are they? They only give
7.		us rates. We need the customers to have confidence and
8.		**(uhm)** the customers know Safari Company as a big brand
9.		**(uhm)** that brand is not there anymore and had all this
10.		infrastructure that they, they, they that gave them comfort
11.		you, you want to book Africa as a domestic call away. You
12.		want to pay Africa as a, it's a cheque that you sign without
13.		going for Reserve Bank approval because it was all in the
14.		same market. **(Uhm)** Those things don't happen anymore
15.		**(uhm).**
16.	Chair:	Sorry you wanted to say something?
17.	Felicity:	I was just going to add on to what Eddie has just said that uh
18.		perceptions on the international market are reality.

In the second excerpt, Felicity also links her contribution to that of the former speaker as she is *just going to add to what Eddie has just said* and proceeds to reformulate the MD's utterances (in itself a rare phenomenon-see discussion under 5.3.7) *that eh perceptions on the*

International market is reality. In CA studies, incorporation of the former speaker's voice, what Fairclough (1992) refers to as intertextuality, is a way of expressing connectivity with the other and giving of support during interaction, as well as serving as a form of warranting the continuation of a turn. It also serves as a way of lending support to, and extending the idea being discussed as well as maintaining the thread of the argument. The level of women's support of others which has been referred to in part above is in addition characterised by the insertion of *uhms* by various women in the room throughout the stream of talk of others, as evident during Eddie's talk in excerpt (16b) above, (a total of 7 *uhms* in a turn with a word count of 154 words), signalling what Fishman (1978b) refers to as giving constant attention to the speaker. This hypothesis is supported by Schegloff's (1972:379) study in which he suggests that listeners or hearers make known their attention by using back channel speech or assent terms: for instance *mm, yeah, yes, right* etc which Hirshman (1973:8) affirms are demonstrations of continued, co-ordinated hearership and are an essential part of any meaningful conversation. The pattern of how women present themselves as supporting topics raised by others, and how men offer minimal ratification of themes introduced by their interlocutor, preferring to underline their own, continues in much the same vein as illustrated above.

The supporting role offered by women is sharply contrasted in the excerpt below which serves to show the lack of support of colleagues evident in much male to male talk.

Excerpt 16c: (Safari Co: Day 2)		
1.	Mandhla (M):	You can't go into the global world and global market
2.		and say Safari Company and expect everyone to be
3.		excited like they used to be ten years ago because of
4.		what has happened so there is need for us in Zim or
5.		the whole world of Safari Company, I mean it affects
6.		us at home, there is need for us to come up with
7.		strategies that address that problem that has been
8.		created by the (( )).
9.	Sam:	Re-branding (( )) maybe it's a publicity drive to sort
10.		of separate ourselves from the plain brand and bring
11.		ourselves as a new brand to…
12.	Roderick:	Can we really say that
13.		the brand is bad? Is that an accurate assessment eh eh
14.		(( )) (*Everyone is talking at once*) (That's a
15.		perception)
16.	Mandhla.:	So we we I think we need to correct. Charity begins at
17.		home somebody said yesterday we need to get it right
18.		where we are

19.	Susan:	Before you carry on and then make the next step when
20.		we have already credibility but if you don't have
21.		credibility at home and you go across and you say
22.		here we are there is the same problem that we see
23.		there.
24.	Fran (F):	Also another great route another route that we might
25.		take instead of opening an office in Kenya is to
26.		identify a company where we will we can use as eh on
27.		a strategic alliance local basis so that if people are
28.		booking they do a one call like for Africa (how do
29.		they do…) and ignore when they are going to use us
30.		I…

In the excerpt above, Sam completely disregards Mandhla's idea about the *global world and global market...* and suggests that they *come up with strategies that address the problem that has been created…*, to identify the problem as *branding*. He instantly offers *Re-branding…as a publicity drive to sort of separate ourselves from the plain brand….* Highlighting a solution before analysis or discussion of the issue at hand is not a form of support. It can be used rather, as a way of getting attention from one's audience as well as sounding knowledgeable. Highlighting a solution before analysis or discussion can, apart from being perceived as a scoring strategy, also be viewed as a demonstration of communicative competence where the active listener displays his ability to stay on the same wavelength as the speaker. Speakers can also use this strategy to define the topic or as a way of leading discussion. In other instances, a topic was 'frozen' by the introduction of a solution evidently coming out of the talk of the speaker before working out of the problem, which was more of a 'scoring' strategy or one-upmanship than a show of support, a tactic often used by men to maintain leadership in discussion.

The extract below exemplifies the case in point.

Excerpt 16d: (Truba Bank: Day 3)		
1.	Maud:	The mass market is one segment that we need to focus
2.		on and…
3.	Bradley:	[Let us set the subject of the unbanked and
4.		underbanked for another meeting with Smart Solutions
5.		Product House. I know they are working on something
6.		along those lines already.

In this excerpt, Maud's opening turn shows her in a leadership role. She introduces a topic for discussion and as discussed above, the second speaker, who is male, offers an evaluation and

solution before debate. This is a non-supportive way of exhibiting control over decision making processes by pushing for early closure of a point or debate.

Another excerpt taken from a meeting at a bank site corroborates the point made above.

<div style="background-color:#e0e0e0; padding:10px;">

Excerpt 16e: (Truba Bank: Day 5)

1.	John:	But we could say that about most other banks. Really we are
2.		discussing a known secret, a common practice where there is a
3.		lot of…
4.	Mark:	[Insider trading. That's what it is and that is what is pulling
5.		down the more conventional or should I say traditional banks
6.		that believe in going by the book. We are struggling because the
7.		rules of the bank have changed greatly. Things are not what
8.		they used to be. There are now other rules understood by some
9.		and not by others

</div>

By pointing out a solution to a problem or more plainly, taking the words out of the mouth of another speaker, the second speaker hijacks the point of his interlocutor and develops the point more fully with no reference to the previous speaker, thereby appearing as the originator of the idea. This is another example of a scoring and non-supportive strategy often used by men. Altogether there were 10 similar instances of men usurping the ideas of others and expressing them as their own. These instances serve as examples of how CA features such as interruption (discussed in 5.3.4) can serve the pragmatic purpose of asserting leadership.

For men, taking on the supportive role in discussion and talking topically appeared to be the dispreferred option. They preferred to present themselves as originators of topics which placed them in a leading role, as they took up topics offered by others and developed them by changing them covertly or overtly, or alternatively suggested a different viewpoint. Picking out information in ongoing conversation and presenting it as new, is an interpersonal function of language which correlates with Fairclough's (1992) 'own-ness' of an idea. This refers to how interlocutors struggle to uphold and strategically position their own contributions in ongoing interaction which has a bearing upon relations of leadership and power. Thus, what and how much of the other's talk is incorporated into another's, has a bearing on processes of power construction in ongoing talk-in interaction in encounters laminated by subtle hegemonic struggle.

In the analysis of transcribed data, in relation to quantity and function according to gender of participant, it emerged that men played the leader role in discussions as they raised a total of 58 and women 17 topics. Of the topics raised by men, 38 were directly supported by women, and 10 by men (refer to 5.3.5 for fuller discussion on topic control). In the case of the 10 instances that men's topics were not ratified by women or men, this was followed by an introduction or detour of topic by men. Outright disregard of a topic introduced by another is in a way, a power strategy as topics in high-level meetings are normally introduced and changed by those in leadership positions or the more dominant participants.

In trying to explain why men prefer to play the leader role in conversation, an appeal can be made to the definitions of sexism as embodied in the theories of the discourse historical method (see Chapter 3). In this approach, it has been argued that the analyst may draw from the socio-cognitive approach. This would allow the analyst to view the utterance made by a male interactant in a specific context, as a prejudiced remark moreso when speaker 'rights' appear to be linked to gender and a woman's role is explicitly made subordinate. The analysts' role is therefore to expose inferences contained in discourse underlined by a degree of bias.

Closely linked to the support role that women evidently play in meetings, is the collaborative style of interaction that women seem to prefer. The excerpt below demonstrates how women used supportive simultaneous speech, filled in gaps for the other and that frequently, 'idea chaining' (discussed above in 5.3.5), in which a number of ideas were snowballed to form a theme occurred, often amounting to a group formulated decision.

Excerpt 16f: (WES Co: Day 1)		
1.	F1:	I am proposing that we look at the suggested motor plan a lot
2.		closer
3.	F2:	Yes and I would say we need to benchmark ours against some
4.		eh eh (*she looks around the room in search of the correct term*)
5.	F3:	Reputable companies? (*2 or three other voices offer the same*
6.		*suggested word*)
7.	F2:	Yes that's the word I was looking for. Thanks.
8.	F4:	What are companies in South Africa doing for instance?
9.	M:	Well what I could ascertain when we went down there last week
10.		was that they are trying to make them as inclusive and as
11.		comprehensive as possible (uhm).
12.	F2:	What I liked about it is that the plan included all the other
13.		additionals which made it more complete (uhm). They had a
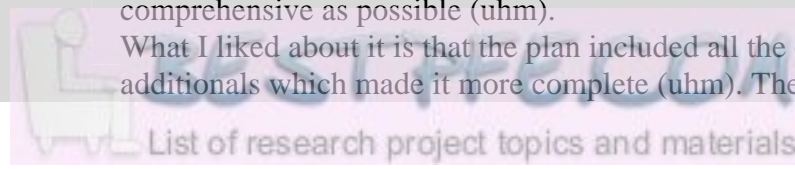
14.		towing plan in case one's car broke down
15.	F5:	What we should be looking at is out of all that, what can we in
16.		Zimbabwe afford given the limiting circumstances that we are
17.		operating under.
18.	F6:	I like what I am hearing. I would like to suggest that we set up a
19.		working group to look into this and to work on it and then they
20.		can bring in a working document (uhm) as soon as they are
21.		done perhaps at our next meeting

In the example above, F1 starts off by making a proposal in itself a strategy for inviting discussion by all, supported by the use of the 'we' pronoun. F2 explicitly agrees with her and adds on the idea of benchmarking their company's efforts and as she evidently struggles in search of the correct word, F3's voice emerges the loudest as a number of women chip in simultaneously with the phrase *reputable companies*. None of them however proceed to take over the debate, as happened in excerpt 16e above. The innovations in South Africa are then discussed with each adding onto the previous speaker's contribution, first the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of the plan, then the idea of the towing plan, followed by the suggestion that there is need for caution given the circumstances around Zimbabwe, until the proposal is made that they set up a working group.

In the data, there were 26 other similar sequences of women speaking in support of each other as they linked their ideas and spoke in speech enclaves. It was noted that women, more so than men, interactively and jointly produced a point of view as a means of supporting the other and therefore co-constructed meaning.

In ordinary one-at-a time conversations as described by Sacks et al (1974), a single speaker ascribes him/herself roles to the 'floor' for the duration of the contribution, which means that other participants have no right to take substantive turns, and therefore no rights to control topics though they will still be expected to give feedback in the form of minimal responses. Women however, were observed supportively sharing the floor and often jointly sharing rights in turn taking and topic introduction and shift, and in the process, produced a commonly worked out point of view, and appeared to be sensitive to the orientation of the other. An FDG respondent (Amy) commented as follows:

> *I have also found that women often speak in support of one another in meetings. I think its time that women take up the strategies that men employ to dominate conversation in public fora. They work together in networks. It's*

like lobbying really. We do not do enough of that and evidently we emerge the weaker parties.

This sort of collaborative interaction has reinforced the views of Edelsky (1981), Coates (1988) and Holmes (1990) that women play a more co-operative and supportive role in meetings than do men. Another explanation could be that women, being in the minority in these meetings feel compelled to support one another and are less threatened by the negative face of one of their own gender. Amy seems to however suggest a more 'structured' form of support where ideas are lobbied outside of the actual meeting as men tend to do on the 'green', in order to project a stronger voice in meetings.

The additional example analysed below, approximates the pattern noted and observed frequently in the data, where the one woman introduces a point and the other acts in a supporting role, making comments which either support the speaker's point or elaborate it in a supportive way without attempting to take control of the topic.

Excerpt 16g: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 2)		
1.	Precious:	I would just like to make reference to the projects office. I
2.		believe its part of their role to assist all other work streams
3.		with with their projects from log on stage to sign-off.
4.	Penelope:	I would wholly support that idea as I think that we are
5.		honestly spending time going round in circles when there
6.		is an office that could run the projects for us. I mean in the
7.		sense that they chair report meetings and make sure we are
8.		all on course
9.	Lydia:	I would go along with that and that way we are making
10.		maximum use of resources and expertise uhm

In the example above, women clearly supported one another with the last female speaker in the excerpt above confidently underlining the value of such a strategy on behalf of the rest of her interlocutors by declaring in the plural form (*that way*, **we** *are making maximum use of resources and expertise*).

The example above can also serve as an illustration of the functions of group operations where full participation and interaction by members can provoke thoughts and ideas in the minds of others resulting in a higher standard of decision making in line with what Mullins (1999) terms the highest common view emerging from a group (see 2.7). The three female speakers begin their utterances with the pronoun (*I*) and move on to use the inclusive first

personal plural 'we' which as discussed above, acknowledges the existence and contribution of others and in this instance, connotes a sense of the sharing of a common view in the discussion.

It was observed and noted in the field notes however that not many women took part in the initial stages of meetings, opting it seemed, to offer their ideas and views towards the end of the encounter. The extract above was drawn from the last quarter of the meeting. It also emerged in the data that women in conversation with men exhibited long periods of silence preferring, it seemed, to enter the floor in symmetrical interaction with other women as the example above demonstrates. As with classroom interaction, being silent is a classic defense mechanism in unequal encounters and a possible interpretation of the phenomenon noted is that women, especially the younger ones, may at times feel intimidated in situations where they are heavily outnumbered by men and some of the male participants are much older giving rise to an imbalance attributable to gender-role socialisation.

It can be concluded therefore, that as evident in the data and discussion, men and women presented themselves in different ways, with men observed not aligning themselves to the views of co-interactants in discussion as well as speaking more confidently with the result that they were better able to take on a leader role and steer the discussion in a direction determined by them. Women were on the other hand, observed taking on a more supportive and collaborative type of role as they accommodated the views of others and worked together to present a jointly worked solution.

5.4.6   Self-presentation strategies in problem solving

Much of the discourse in meetings revolves around how problems are presented, how the decision-making process is conducted and how problems are resolved. In the inter-professional encounters examined, it appeared that women and men actively construct decisions out of discourses and interactions in different ways. Tracing how a decision is arrived at is a complex process. Decisions emerge from a number of activities and contexts rendering it difficult to pin down the moment in talk in which the decision is made. The process of decision making and problem solving, as Atkinson and Drew (1979) discuss it, is discursively dispersed and fragmented and will therefore be traced and treated accordingly.

Linked to the issue of fragmented and distributed problem-solving discourses are the complex modes of presentation used and the interpretation by different professionals depending on their access to knowledge, their authority and levels of responsibility. Often, problems have to be reframed before they can be addressed fully and as Atkinson (1995) explains, information from other disciplines or situational contexts has to be presented, if speakers are to enhance their own credibility in the decision making process.

In the excerpts below, I examine and discuss how interactants distribute information, the ways in which knowledge is presented and re-presented by both women and men in the construction of a problem and its apparent solution.

The texts serving as examples of the point being made are drawn from a number of meetings and carefully selected contexts which illustrate the tendencies noted in the selected transcribed data. The findings of this research suggest that men and women produce different behaviours in the course of discussion as they seek to solve a given problem. It emerged that men tended to produce more utterances to establish operating procedures as they asked the group to *look at how we can possibly get round this issue...,* invited others to *look at the factors hindering our entrance into the Asian market first...,*called for more logical thinking (*First things first, do we have the mandate...*), set the parameters of the discussion (*before we even go there...*) *,* and prioritised the order in which issues were to be discussed (*let us settle first the issue of our own reporting structures*). These utterances indicate a more concerted attempt on the part of men to control the process around problem solving. During the discussions themselves, there was widespread evidence of behaviour aimed at establishing evaluation criteria during discussion. Men frequently assessed the progress of the debate by evaluating questions such as *Is this how the Company wishes to go..., Is there any harm in that...? How will that aid our processes...Should banks be held responsible?* asked in the middle of a discussion without obviously focussing on how the discussion was unfolding. Instead of following through the logic of the discussion, men tended to focus on prematurely selecting solutions to the problem under discussion as a scoring strategy. Women, on the other hand, appeared more concerned with the outcome of the debate, producing more statements to generate alternative solutions and positively evaluating ongoing debate by asking suggestive questions such as *So how should we look at the issue of branding…, Is this not a question of placing ourselves where the potential markets are..., Shouldn't we be*

looking at ways of tracking the warm leads…, Shouldn't we be designing new products to suit our own local market or perhaps adapt what you saw as successes during the visit you refer to….

During the course of debate, it was also noted that men produced more negative evaluations of the solutions presented by others, male or female. One typical example of statements made by male group members is as follows:

Excerpt 17: (Truba Bank: Day 5)		
1.	Douglas	We have been talking too much about the rights of the
2.		client. We shouldn't have made that the focus of the
3.		meeting or our aim. Let us go back to basics. What do our
4.		policy guidelines say about the rights of the customer?
5.		That's how the clientele out there is going to judge us. As
6.		a bank we have clear guidelines. We do not have to guess
7.		or spend so much time debating...

The behaviour illustrated above may be viewed as an attempt to assert control over the types of solutions that will be considered by the group. Douglas directs the meeting to *go back to basics*. This kind of behaviour, represents a reluctance on the part of men to accept the proposals presented by others as further demonstrated in the utterance (*We shouldn't have made that the focus of the meeting or our aim*) as well as a strategy to prevent the meeting from reaching closure before their contribution has been considered and adopted. Felicity, an FGD respondent expressed the following view:

> *You know, sometimes I get the feeling that men just talk for the sake of talking so that their presence and voice in the meeting can be registered.*

Women on the other hand demonstrated behaviours that were representative of members wishing to generate more solutions during debate. As discussed above in 5.4.3, the use of suggesting moves commonly realised by linguistic elements such as *let's,* used mainly as a directive and as a suggestive and *how about…* or, *we might want to consider…, why don't we*, were noted. Such behaviour is indicative of a high degree of creativity and tolerance for diversity in producing alternatives to solve the issues and problems the group was facing.

In problem solving meetings, women were also observed making more positive evaluations towards the end of the discussion than did men. Statements such as *that should work…,*

especially given the environment we are working in..., I believe that is how we should look at this whole issue of serving the lower end of the market..., You could actually be right... Flat interest rates throughout will not get us more clients... are clearly supportive statements as they help towards the generation of solutions. The behaviour noted here, along with the perception held, is consistent with the observation that women tend to be more supportive of others than men (Fisher and Todd 1983; Coates 1993 and Tannen 1984). As Fisher, (1983) points out, such positive evaluations towards the end of a group meeting can be functional as they can help group members reach closure and arrive at a decision to be implemented. It was observed, as in other instances noted before (see 5.3.9, 5.3.11, 5.4.6), that women tended to speak more towards the end of meetings. No systematic study of this was however done as the numbers of participants by gender varied from one meeting to the next, and the topics of discussion were in most cases job specific, making it possible for some participants to speak more than others. There were therefore, too many variables to allow for an accurate frequency count of when in the meeting, women and men spoke, in order to provide meaningful findings to support a strong hypothesis.

The conclusions drawn here would have been more reliable had it been possible to ask interactants soon after the meeting to provide accounts of their speech behaviours after they had been performed. Interactants, playing the role of co-researchers, would ideally be given an opportunity to view the interactions on videotape and be asked to reflect on 'what is going on here' Cicourel (1992) in reference to the meeting that took place.

In analysing male and female behavioural tendencies during discussions in corporate settings, it was apparent that gender is a significant variable in the assessment of how women and men use verbal strategies in talk-in-interaction. I also noted the impact this has on group decision making. There are possibly broader explanations for these findings, which I could not explore to conclusion in this research. It is possible that the varied composition of the groups and topics of discussion would result in a different perspective on the discussion. It is also possible that some of the behaviours that surfaced in the data were due to the unequal gender distribution, which may have had a dysfunctional impact on group decision making. For example, the question arises if women are more likely to act passively in a group in which they were in the minority, and how this may have varied if they had interacted in a group with a more equal distribution of men and women or further still, how they may perform in problem solving in a group in which they outnumbered men as prescribed in purposive

sampling (4.2.1). Conversely, men's communication behaviour in problem solving may be affected by the same compositions in reverse as may be the case in all other instances.

5.4.7 Face management in meetings

Another important discursive mechanism which characterised the difference between men and women is the notion of face management. Face management, (as discussed in 3.7 under politeness strategies), involves how one presents and manages oneself in the face of others (Goffman 1959). In a power relational context such as in meetings, face management plays a key part in both institutional and professional discourse settings. Face management, which includes the face wants, rights and needs of interactants, is an important social skill that underlies politeness strategies. The key notions, as in the politeness model (Brown and Levinson 1987), are those of face and power. Working on the assumption that speaker role and identity are pervasive in management meetings, the concept of 'face work' is significant in a study of this nature, since it touches on the way in which people are involved, participate and present themselves in work related interaction, as they take account of each other in the moment by moment production of talk. What is worth noting however is that face management as a learnt behavioural pattern is not always gendered, as age and/or status and context are other important variables that will have a bearing on social and power relations.

Typical examples of face management strategies noted in the data include examples of how women and men in management meetings often deftly apply face-work strategies to abate both social and professional discomfort and how at times members come under pressure, imposed or of their own making, to maintain roles, orientations and identities which are sanctioned by the workplace. It was not uncommon for example, to observe women come to the rescue of another female colleague who appeared to be struggling with a proposition by colluding with her, a mitigatory strategy, as the example below demonstrates.

Excerpt 18a: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 5)		
1.	Jessica:	Our insurance profile at the moment has some disturbing portfolios.
2.		We keep having to remind some of our big clients to pay their
3.		premiums and…
4.	Sandile(M)	[Why are we only hearing about it now? Surely this is a
5.		huge risk to the business and one that should have been flagged as soon
6.		as the trend was identified
7.	Betty:	If we let her go through her report then maybe we will find out why.

8.	Coty:	What I think she is trying to say is we are actually putting ourselves at
9.		risk if, as suggested earlier, we allow our business to be driven by
10.		volumes and not look at other issues related to this growth.

In other noted instances, women spoke as voice representatives of the group as they sought to embody commonsense rationality by openly acknowledging the existence of hierarchical and professional interdependence in meetings, and that way, upholding the face of the more senior colleagues as the example below demonstrates. The illustration is taken from a portion of the meeting during which the company secretary was trying to define and separate two intricately similar issues for the benefit of some of the non-executive board members who were having problems understanding the issue under discussion. Careful not to sound condescending as she leads the discussion around the two concepts of insider trading and front running, Fiona uses the inclusive first person plural *we,* which blurs the difference between those who know the meaning of the terms and those who might not be so sure. Her open invitation to the traders to make the distinction clearer means that no one's face is threatened.

Excerpt 18b: (Truba Bank: Day 2)		
1.	Fiona:	What **we** are saying is there is a marked difference between
2.		insider trading and front running and though the two should be
3.		viewed as detrimental to our business, I would say that **we**
4.		should still try and treat the two as separate issues. Perhaps the
5.		traders could make this distinction clearer
6.		(*One of the senior traders then took the opportunity to explain the two concepts and made himself available for further consultation on the distinction*)

Female addressors were also noted often placing themselves in a subordinate position to their male colleagues as they asked questions or sought clarification or approval from them. The key issue here, and one discussed by Ige and De Kadt (2002), may be the role that politeness plays in the construction of gender identities. By presenting themselves this way, the addressor and the addressee consolidate the perception that each has of the other. Asking someone more senior to explain a point results in a hierarchically interdependent relationship forming in the sense that the superior is asked a question and is thus indirectly rated, and in reply, offers a needed response.

Other more obvious instances of self-presentation which can be interpreted as face management were evident when juniors sought to reframe the utterance of a more senior

person by the use of metalingual mitigation markers which operate on the pragmatic level to avoid face threats, as exemplified in the brief excerpt below.

<div style="background:#e5e5e5;padding:0.5em">

Excerpt 18c: (Truba Bank: Day 2)

1.	Chair:	I suggest that we take up this issue with all our brokers and write to
2.		them and say we are aware of some of their corrupt practices
3.	Marshall:	**Might** it not **perhaps** be better **if** we approached the issue **somewhat**
4.		differently **say** we go the one on one interview route. That **might**
5.		reduce the likelihood of head on confrontation.

</div>

In the example above, Marshall, wishing to modify the suggested action by the chair, but also wanting to pay attention to the face of the addressee, adopts the use of hedges to mitigate the potential face threatening suggestion which could offend the chair's negative face. The use of marked politeness forms in the use of hedges such as *might and perhaps* above, suppositions such as *if,* detensifiers such as *somewhat* and the hesitation explicit in the whole excerpt, further serve as attenuating strategies often used by the less powerful when addressing the more powerful. Speech as identified and discussed above was typically associated with male underachievers (as observed and revealed in post recording interviews). The consequences of this may be twofold. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that the face of a more junior or relatively powerless speaker who presents himself this way may be protected while they may however not obtain the same attention in return. Assuming women and younger men, or those in less powerful positions or indeed the underachievers have face wants to the same extent as the average person, and yet less relative power, the use of face saving self-presentation strategies such as discussed above, is a way of maintaining their own face without threatening that of the addressee but one that could, in the workplace, prove detrimental to their own professional image.

Another outstanding feature which differentiated women from men, and one closely linked to face management in meetings was the way in which each group tried to avoid direct confrontation. Workplace meetings are by their nature and constitution, sites of struggle shrouded in enacted and external politeness where utterances are made to sound more acceptable to the addressee and hence increase their chances of ratification or agreement. Show of overt power in meetings can sometimes yield negative results and in order to gain compliance and get colleagues to offer support, comply or save face, various self-presentation discourse strategies have to be employed. In my examination of the ways in which men and women engage in or avoid confrontation in meetings, the data shows that the use of particular

politeness strategies in the terms discussed above, may serve to maintain roles and identities. This is because politeness strategies are primarily motivated by the need to take account of the 'other', and here the 'other' is complex in that issue and factors beyond the interactional setting may also be included as the speaker may be addressing institutional rather than personal goals. In addition, the surface forms of an utterance may for instance, express solidarity or positive politeness, but the underlying interactional goal may in fact be manipulative or transactional (Holmes et al., 1999) and may not at first be apparent.

The excerpts below demonstrate how men and women employ various strategies to manoeuvre their way through difficult encounters through use of politeness strategies as defined above and how this impacts on their power strategies. I also analyse how men use repressive discourse to manipulate an otherwise sensitive situation. The excerpt is taken from a potentially explosive situation where some members of the management team feel that selection to attend the grand opening of the company's two new branches was not handled transparently. The board chair has had to come to the rescue of the young woman who heads PR and was therefore responsible for handpicking those who were to attend. Rumbles could be heard clearly across the room particularly from Eddy.

Excerpt 18d: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 1)		
1.	Chair:	Is there anyone who really feels that he has been left out. Ahm be honest
2.		with me, and they need to go I mean be honest and say I need to go
3.		because of one, two, three then you can go.
4.	Eddy:	[No I will miss nothing.
5.	Chair:	[I don't like
6.		that. (Laughter) (04) I I I have mentioned the point that we need some
7.		general managers to be functioning here. In fact, you, you (laughter) let me
8.		tell you that in particular in the absence of all senior managers and the
9.		others, I'd really think you should be around. So, did you want to go?
10.	Eddy:	No I I I
11.	Chair:	Thank you for withdrawing.

The Chair, who is male, explicitly constructs and presents a powerful professional identity as a buffer strategy, by making it unequivocally clear that the final decision of who gets to attend the opening ceremony rests with him and not the PR manager (*… be honest with me … I mean be honest and say I need to go… then you can go*). At the level of linguistic form, the Chair's construction of his identity and role as final gatekeeper is realised by the use of 'I' statements e.g. when he says emphatically *I mean be honest* and *I'd really think you should be around*, while strategies at the discourse level include listing devices (*… say I need to go*
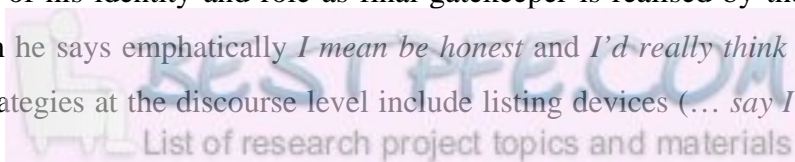
because of one, two, three) and interruption in the form of a retort expressing strong disapproval (*I don't like that*) directed at Eddy in response to his facetious and callous remark (*No I will miss nothing*) at which the other members in the meeting laugh as a way of diffusing a possible collision of roles, authority and personalities. Perhaps stunned by Eddy's bold remark which fails to pay attention to his superior's face needs, the Chair falters a little (*I I I*) before he shifts from pronoun '*I*' to enlist the general opinion and support of the other members present (*we need some general managers to be functioning here*), a statement aimed at making Eddy feel important and one which also addresses his 'face' needs as it reduces the level of threat to the addressee's face. Negative politeness strategies are particularly useful since they are specifically aimed at recognising an addressee's need for autonomy and distance. As the interaction proceeds, the chair shifts to more direct and assertive strategies through use of the pragmatic particle *in fact*, used by other males elsewhere in the data (16 times), which communicates conviction and intensity of feeling concerning the attendance issue. His repeated use of *you, you* serves to direct focus on Eddy. On the other hand, his use of verb forms such as the imperative *let me tell you* functions as repressive discourse, as the statement underlines the fact that he, as chair, ultimately has the right to make decisions as he sees fit. The verb form also operates as 'positive face saving discourse' where the wayward manager is made to feel appreciated through the laminated expression (*of all senior managers, I'd rather think you should be around*) and at the same time being made aware that this present decision is not subject to appeal. The chair's use of the modal words *rather* and *think* in this otherwise delicate situation, helps to reduce mutual hostilities and at the same time allow him to imply 'I know that you know that what you are asking for is not possible'. The ensuing question (*So did you want to go?*) cannot be answered in any other way but the negative (*No I I I*) at which point the chair, having prevailed, forecloses the exchange and ironically thanks Eddy *for withdrawing*. Through the Chair's dextrous 'face' work, both walk away from the scene of confrontation with dignity, one evidently more so than the other.

The excerpt and discussion above is an excellent example of the ways in which men at different status levels negotiate their relative power. Feeling challenged by a junior in the discussion of some risky proposition, the chair, faced with a situation that is highly face threatening, asserts his authority more overtly and expresses succinctly and directly his proposition using forms of negative politeness which are addressee-oriented.

Aggressive posturing, challenges, put-downs and other forms of verbal behaviour noted above and elsewhere, appear to be a common feature of male-male speech. It emerges repeatedly in the data that challenges rather than statements of support are a typical way for men to respond to the speech of other men and in fewer cases women. An FDG respondent (Tracy) commented:

> *That's how men tend to speak to one another - very abruptly and more often*
> *than not, their aim is to challenge other speakers more than it is to agree. In*
> *fact they very rarely agree openly with each other*

Other examples, drawn from the data, of how men tend to challenge, as a form of self-presentation, rather than support the ideas of other men include unmitigated utterances as responses to another's comment such as, *No I don't think so..., I don't agree..., Its not true..., I don't like that.* Women on the other hand, if openly challenged or faced with a confrontational situation, will more likely adopt verbal strategies which express what Holmes et al. (1999) term confrontation avoidance-based negative politeness to soften the force of their proposition. In the extract below, taken from an animated strategic meeting where participants are discussing logistics related to human resources, the woman being quizzed over her assertion that the company does not have adequately experienced staff at the top, resorts to using negative politeness to get her male colleagues to see her point of view in this equally sensitive situation while her male interlocutors employ the more typical verbal aggressive strategies to disagree with her.

Excerpt 18e:		*(Safari Co: Day 6)*
1.	Nomsa:	I said I think we have experienced staff somewhere and I said we
2.		we have experienced staff at lower levels. Management levels we
3.		can't say we have experienced staff (( )) (Laughter). So how can
4.		you link experienced staff when they are not so experienced?
5.	Gerald:	Probably not
6.	Nomsa:	So it means the lower staff are sustaining, are propping everybody
7.		up.
8.	Gerald*:*	It doesn't necessarily follow.
9.	Robson:	Do we have commitment at the top level?
10.	Nomsa:	Can I just explain what I mean so that we don't confuse the issue
11.		here? We have drivers who are experienced. I don't need to be an
12.		experienced driver to drive but I may not be experienced. The
13.		driver's experience does not help his position. So that's what I am
14.		talking about. In the different capacities that we operate in, we may
15.		we may not have that experience as such.

Nomsa, faced with likely opposition to the point she raises about the degrees of experience at management level, uses some form of covert strategy to make a point about an issue that is likely to sound disparaging and force her colleagues to be on the defensive. While asserting her point of view in restating categorically that *I said* twice in *l.* 1*,* she, like other women elsewhere in the data (a count of 29 instances) uses the subjective and precautionary hedging performative *I think* soon after, which in this case, serves the function of 'coating' her observation and seeks to make it clear that her assessment of the lack of expertise in the division under discussion is just her opinion, thus toning down her confidence on the matter. By stating that there is *experienced staff somewhere*, in itself a very vague statement, and then stating unconditionally that there is expertise at *lower levels*, and by innuendo none at the top, Nomsa is hard-pressed to show solidarity with her colleagues and to remain polite before she finally makes the point she has been struggling to make this far, that *the lower staff are sustaining, are propping everybody up*. When Gerald quizzes her assertion and Robson seeks to introduce another dimension to the discussion, that of commitment at the top, Nomsa is again pushed to re-explain her point of view almost apologetically (*so that we don't confuse the issue here*). This is a typical example of an avoidance based negative politeness strategy in which Nomsa struggles to take account of her colleagues as the 'other' to serve both institutional and personal goals. Unfortunately though, her covert strategy of expressing low affinity with ideas being proffered, a typical female strategy noted above in 5.4.3 and in varying degrees elsewhere in the data, and her expression of addressee face saving politeness, portrays her, in Brown and Levinson (1987) terms, as a relatively powerless interlocutor. The issue of competence and expertise is debated by other participants for a while longer, with her utterance being misrepresented by a few speakers. There is no further attempt on her part to reclaim the floor and set the record straight until Robson resorts to using a humorous quip as a face saving strategy but somewhat cynical in nature (*So some of you are not able!*) as an escape route to defuse an otherwise potentially volatile situation, a kind of face management strategy clearly aimed at avoiding further confrontation.

5.4.8 Doing collegiality as a self-presentation strategy

Another gender differentiating feature that emerged from the transcripts is that of the use of informal register to signify footing of semi-equal status and collegiality. Collegiality refers to the way that speakers in a particular speech community seek to bond with one another in

particular ways through how they use language and certain terms designed to cultivate an atmosphere of congeniality. Depending on status, construction of professional identity is inevitably concerned with the ways in which power and solidarity are enacted through discourse. Men more often than women, used quasi-everyday terms consistent with Goffman's view of backstage language behaviour (see 2.4) in place of the more elaborate linguistic forms which might be more in keeping with the co-text of meetings. They were also noted to make explicit expressions of appreciation, approval or agreement as an expression of solidarity as they incorporated a great many positive politeness strategies into their interaction, especially when they addressed male colleagues. The expressions *Thank you for that*, *that's a valid point*, *point taken*, were said repeatedly by men in acknowledgement of an idea expressed by a male colleague.

Men, more so than women, also made deliberate use of first names. In Appendix A, two colleagues are mentioned by first name, *Tobias* in *l.* 211 and *David* in *l.* 255 but interestingly, from a cultural perspective, an older man is referred to by a younger male as *Mr Mavu* in line 330. Also deserving note is the fact that the woman speaking in *l.* 83 does not use a first name where she could have, as she refers to her colleague as *her.* There were altogether 23 naming instances by males and just eight by women when the identities of the persons referred to could have been subsumed under the auspices of the department in which they work as shown in the example below.

Excerpt 19a: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 3)		
1.	M:	I would like to mention that the times I have spoken to Gift and
2.		Tabu on problems that I have had in my office eh, they have
3.		been quick. Tabu and Gift have always responded very quickly.
4.	M:	That's a good point Tom…

Use of first names in referring to or speaking to someone, indicates familiarity or solidarity and clearly defines the relational context of the interlocutors as evidenced in the utterance itself. Where first names were used in addressing women, this was in instances where the addressee was a subordinate in terms of age or position as was in the case of the chair and Thabani (28 and married) cited in section 5.4.5. In the same meeting however, the same chair referred to his 'right hand' (29 and single) as Miss Matongo (field notes) which seems to point to the fact that the position and status of the addressee is a significant variable in this case. Married women were more often referred to by their titles and second names. Used non-

reciprocally, addressing the other by first name can express power or patronage. It was also observed that in instances where a good point was raised by a female, the response was more general as in for example *Thank you for mentioning that* and subsequently followed by a qualification and expansion of the same point by some male colleague. It is worth noting that the acknowledgement of the point made is without obvious mention of the name of the female contributor. Where men were observed acknowledging the point made by another male colleague, obvious mention was made of their name. Examples of this are demonstrated in utterances such *as that was a pertinent point raised by Sandile...,I would go along with Mark's suggestion...Your observation Gerald was very insightful...*

In addition, it was also noted that in doing collegiality overtly, the younger women notably adopted some speech styles often characterised as typically male. They used the afro-American vowel lengthening drawl at the end of certain words such as *it's kind:a hard to imagine, its ba:d*, as a way of becoming part of mainstream culture, and used the same address form *guy* as used by men to express a degree of camaraderie and solidarity in referring to co-participants. The excerpt below had the highest count of the phenomenon in a single utterance.

Excerpt 19b: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 4)		
1.	Mary-Anne:	A lot of the other **guys**, if you look at Percy, David,
2.		Paruvinga and Adam, Delayi, I mean those **guys**, I think
3.		those are relatively young **guys** and chasing after the
4.		dollar in the market. I don't think there was anything
		that really happened. In fact these are relatively young
		guys who are just chasing the dollar.

Women used the word guy five times. In 11 other instances, the word *guy* was used by men to refer to male and female colleagues of the same age or younger (see Appendix A *l.* 183), and of more or less equal role status. In the FGDs Gerald, a male respondent confirmed that it was

> *A man thing to refer to each other as guy, you know. We do it all the time. It just*
> *sounds right. Not too formal. It kind:a puts people at ease.*

Gender flex, which is the temporary use of communication behaviours typical of the other gender (Berko and Grieif, 1983) has, as one of its characteristics, the potential for increasing the speaker's influence. The functional intent of the use of the word *guy* as detected from the

context, tone, manner and spirit was one of seeking to be identified with the 'other'. This is one clear example of changing gender-roles, with perceptions and behaviours that are considered atypical for women. It could be argued therefore that women, as the subculture, whether consciously or not, sought to use certain 'male' strategies and verbal behaviours as self-presentation strategies to fit in with the identified social norms of the group.

Another example of collegiality, though not directly linked to language use but more to interactional behaviours related to a particular gender orientation, was that most meetings included a brief section of 'small talk' at the beginning during which women tended to move from one colleague to another, exchanging niceties and in some cases what appeared to be confidentialities, with colleagues both male and female. Before the meetings started, it was the women who seemingly offered to fill the glasses of water, a typical example of gender-role behaviour. At two of the research sites, meetings ended with a prayer suggested and said by one of the women. In both cases, the individuals who asked that the meeting start with a prayer were recognisably older than the rest of the members present.

5.4.9 Humour in the boardroom

Another characteristic which differentiated men from women was the use of humour in the boardroom. While humour at the workplace may serve the one very basic function of providing amusement (see Appendix A *l*. 3), it in addition serves a range of complex functions in social contexts where gender, collegiality and status are important factors. Humour as a self-presentation strategy may function to serve a number of other functions. Humour in the boardroom for example, is one way through which participants can save each other's face in the course of interaction especially in encounters between people of unequal status. It can also be a means by which superiors maintain their position. It also operates as a socially acceptable strategy by which subordinates challenge superiors. Humour may also serve to express politeness as a confrontation avoidance strategy as discussed in 5.4.7 above. Humour can also be used to construct different types of power relations, express and strengthen solidarity between equals and contribute to social cohesion (Holmes, 1998b). Ten instances of humour were identified from the data. Contrary to assertions made in the FGDs that sometimes women told light jokes, in this study, all were from male participants and were mostly directed at or about male colleagues thus confirming Mumby and Clair's

(2000:191) argument that humour is part of 'male culture in which one's masculine identity is strongly associated with the ability to both give and receive jokes'. Women participating in the meetings however joined in the laughter, though not as loudly as did the men.

Instances of humour included in this analysis are utterances which are identified by the analyst as intended to be amusing by the speaker(s) and perceived to be so by the participants. The examples cited below performed different functions. The instance below is a typical example of repressive humour used in asymmetrical interactions to emphasise power relationships and to subtly control the behaviour of others. See also Appendix A *l*. 436, where the chair makes a sarcastic remark about those who were half awake towards the end of the meeting.

Excerpt 20a: (ODT Insurance Co: Day 5)		
1.	Manja:	There are also cheques which board claims are in the claims
2.		folder and some which go to recoveries, so what I am just
3.		wondering is, are we getting real-time here? And besides,
4.		the efficiency of finance may be affected by us because we
5.		hold on to these cheques and when we said we had to call
6.		for these cheques from the reception desk, I then said to
7.		myself I hope that we got everything
8.	Sox:	I am sure they did, I am sure they did
9.	Manja:	How do you know?
10.	Sox:	Because they reflect as having gone through at the Bank
11.		(interruptions)
12.	Manja:	Thank you and any other comments? Thank you.
13.	Sox:	Just as a comment (chuckle) related to that. This
14.		afternoon I met Mr Madzimike and he gave me a cheque.
15.		So when you mentioned …
16.	Manja:	It's in your pocket right?
17.		(Laughter) Its written Altfin Insurance hopefully…
18.		(Laughter) ha guys can you keep a register to account for
19.		these cheques because it will get stale in your system. He
20.		will be saying I gave Mr eh…eh Sox: We definitely need
21.		systems in place that we adhere to.

The issue of the cheque could be potentially serious as it borders on unprofessional conduct, but Manja, reflecting concern for Sox's face needs, avoids direct face attack which would be commensurate with the institutional requirements of the roles involved, and instead attenuates the reprimand through repressive humour. The attenuation strategy, when humour is used downwards, typically functions as a concealment strategy, which, as Vinton (1989) points

out, serves to disguise a less acceptable message and to maintain respect between participants.

In the example below, drawn from excerpt 18d, humour is used by a junior to challenge the decision of the chair.

Excerpt 20b:		(ODT Insurance Co: Day 1)
1.	Eddy:	No I will miss nothing… (Laughter)
2.	Chair:	I don't like that (laughter)

In excerpt (18d see 5.4.7 for fuller conversation), a male subordinate tries to use humour to confront the power relations in the institutional structures within which they operate. Not able to affront the public relations manager directly for excluding his name on the list of the managers attending the opening function in Mutare, Eddy uses assertive language, which borders on being rude and has a clear shock effect, causing awkward laughter by the other co-interactants because of its incongruity. In this instance, the humour functions as a contestation strategy, used by a subordinate wishing to contest the existing order and authority. This hypothesis is supported by Mumby and Clair (2000) who argue that in certain instances, humour expresses and reproduces a masculine identity and resistance against power in the workplace which in CDA terms, provides interesting insights into the relationship between gender, power and discourse.

It also came through in the data that apart from the laughter, the greater amount of joking, teasing or wisecracking - language functions usually associated with the male domain (Edelsky, 1981) and backstage language behaviour (see 2.4) remained a male preserve. A possible explanation for why women did not match men in this regard is that women, being initially unsure of how a joke or instance of humour might be received by their colleagues, and fearing embarrassment should the quip fall flat, prefer to choose from their repertoires, those strategies that are not likely to expose them in any way and which therefore serve their best interests. Culturally too, as confirmed by all participants male and female during the FGDs

> *Laughing at a joke told by a male is only just acceptable but for a married woman or young and unmarried woman to tell a joke herself in mixed company that is not family is generally frowned upon…*

as this is viewed as a mark of over familiarity (Gaidzanwa 1985).

5.4.10 Paralinguistic features in self-presentation

This subsection does not deal strictly with language issues but the comments made below were derived from noted important differences in the behaviour patterns of men and women in the course of meetings in the boardroom. Various paralinguistic forms of self-presentation were observed, as verbal language is only one of many ways in which people communicate. Interactants can communicate their personhood, orientation and other identities through a repertoire of body gestures, rituals of action and all manner of cultural practices. There were some marked differential behaviours between men and women as observed and noted during the recording sessions. Voice and claim to space emerged as a significant variable that had a bearing on the way that interactants related to one another. Studies in sociolinguistics suggest that the way that one moulds one's voice, the loudness, the tone and resonance, amongst other features is linked to one's sense of self and the perception that one has of how others brand one. Interactants can, through the force, nature and quality of their voice sound assertive, authoritative, and powerful on the one end of the continuum or sound weak, retiring and powerless on the other. Pitch of voice was one aspect in which the association between authority and competence was clearly marked. Although contrasts can only be alluded to, voice being one characteristic that defies definite categorisation (Graddol and Swann, 1989), the political importance of gender based vocal images cannot be dismissed altogether. It was noted that men generally tended to speak with a more aggressive harder edge than women, whose speech was largely characterised by a softer tone and in some instances bordered on inaudibility, with various negative consequences, as in the classic example below:

Excerpt 21: (WES Co: Day 1)		
1.	Marshall:	Could we not say anything about both?
2.	Nomsa:	(( )) convenience (( )) ~~~
3.	Marshall:	We did not hear you. You were whispering in that corner. Were we
4.		supposed to hear or were we not supposed to hear what you were
5.		talking about?
6.	Nomsa:	I said I think…

Having to repeat what one would have just said because the utterance was inaudible can affect colleagues' confidence in the point being made however cogent. Men on the other hand, tended to want to be heard, to 'become' by sounding professionally authoritative through their voices clearly establishing ownership of the space and floor.

Another feature of interest noted and recorded in the field notes, was the sitting position adopted by men as they formed an adjacency pair. Very often, men sat forward with elbows spread on the table and engaged their interlocutor by looking at them directly in the eye and, only when necessary, casting a cursory glance at the notes spread in front of them. Women on the other hand were not observed adjusting their deportment in readiness for an engagement, preferring it seemed, to refer more closely to their note-pad when they spoke, and keeping their eyes modestly down. A female respondent in the FGDs remarked 'That way I do not get distracted.' The younger women in particular, and as observed across a number of meetings, tended to fidget with their pens or held on to the edge of the table, a body posture often associated with a degree of discomfort. Not looking directly into the eyes of the addressee, especially when they are male, is a prominent characteristic of Zimbabwean women's culture, which is however not a universal politeness gesture (see Rudwick and Shanges's 2006 observation in 3.7) which is subconsciously imported into the boardroom. Although it depends on the women themselves to find out the significance and consequence of their demeanour, the posture reinforces the relationship between the addressor and addressee, in this case male and female in a hierarchical order because the addressor consequently develops a meta-rule and conceives himself as superior, and more entitled to be there. Therefore what comes out of this customary etiquette is a form of acquiescence on the part of the one and control on the other, which is advantageous to the male and subjugates the 'other'. This is a clear example of gender-role socialisation manifesting itself in the boardroom. In addition, males, especially the more senior, were observed to talk, even when answering a point raised by a colleague seating further down from them as if addressing the chair, a strategy aimed at high visibility and at making sure their contributions were registered where it really mattered. This could also be interpreted to mean that men are more conscious of hierarchy and boardroom politics than are women. It was also noted that men preferred to sit further up the table and near the chairperson where women were observed sitting towards the bottom end of the table, and in one meeting where the sitting space was limited, the younger women, as they

entered the room, chose of their own accord, to sit a row behind and at the far bottom corner away from the top end of the table.

A general observation made, though not researched systematically was that the way individuals dressed for meetings appeared to have a bearing on how they wished to present themselves and how they were perceived by others. How people dressed for formal meetings also appeared to have influenced the tone of the meetings themselves. The meetings at the bank site where individuals dressed to look corporate were unique in the way that business was conducted and how interactants addressed one another. The meetings were marked by their brevity and attention to relevant detail, business like atmosphere and greater respect of the other, male or female. On the other end of the scale and in meetings where dress code was apparently not clearly prescribed, the conduct of the individuals and the atmosphere of the meetings observed did have a bearing on the 'how' of the interaction.

5.4.11 Summary of findings: Self-presentation skills in meetings

Self-presentation emerged as a significant variable in the way men and women say what they say. In the communicative contexts upon which the study was based, interlocutors managed themselves by attaching their personality to their message and intent. In these encounters, how one presents oneself is a key concept, as the interactional behaviour of people communicating in a relational context is influenced by a mental context model (see 3.9) which has an effect on how the addressor and addressee perceive one another. In addition, general attitudes about the other will be activated and these will become evident in the way the interaction is conducted. When examined critically, the interaction between individuals can provide layers of interpretation and complexity. In the meetings observed and taped, it was evident that in managerial meetings, positive self-presentation had to be well managed if speakers were to authenticate their statuses, professions and identities, as well as their abilities and competence.

Below is a summary of my findings of how men and women used or did not use a range of linguistic features and discursive practices in the way they presented themselves in meetings, which resulted in the shaping of gender identities within the four data sites where top level meetings were recorded. In the data women were outnumbered 44:23 and in some cases, this

imbalance will have influenced the findings. The summary is divided into the different categories applied to the description of self-presentation above and in corresponding order.

Modes of talk as a form of self-presentation

In my data men and women tended often to present themselves in different ways as they used different modes of talk in meetings.

Type-token reasoning

Men were observed speaking with sanctioned authority as they often presented themselves as holders of institutional memory and vast information when they drew comparisons between what used to happen and the situation obtaining at the time of speaking. Women on the other hand preferred to present analyses of problems under discussion at a more local level, at times typifying the problem through an analogy, as they strove to generate solutions through a clear articulation of issues and built into their talk an element of perceptiveness and assessment.

Descriptive talk

Unlike men, women were observed using a more descriptive mode of talk. Whereas men spoke more to the point and sounded more forceful, direct and less diplomatic in their talk, women tended to employ a more resourceful and descriptive style of talk as they narrated and explained events in detail and quoted fewer figures to support their point compared to their male colleagues, and as a result risked sounding less professional.

Narrative talk

Women more so than men used this mode of talk as they recalled accounts of instances in their narratives as a way of supporting an argument with firsthand information from the past. Men, on the other hand, preferred to explain issues more directly.

Cause and effect

There was no marked difference in the way men and women used the cause and effect mode of presentation as both men and women skilfully used the important labels of logical dependency such as if, then, because, therefore (see 5.4.1) as grammatical descriptions of cause and effect in their arguments.

Deterministic and voluntaristic mode of talk

In this regard men and women presented themselves in clearly diverse ways. Men preferred to use a more direct and emphatic style which is more in keeping with the discourse of meetings as they sounded decisive, while women preferred to use a more voluntaristic mode of talk in their presentation, with the result that they sounded non-threatening and nonforceful. In the expression of personal opinion and value judgement, men made their own position unequivocally clear as they mapped out an argument and used bold and unmodalised statements. They also spoke authoritatively and used more declarative statements. Men also appeared keen to demonstrate expert knowledge and clear understanding of issues in the way they offered instant topic solutions, as explicitness of intention and meaning often becomes a source of strength and strategic exploitation. Women, on the other hand, were observed often failing to position themselves firmly in relation to their ideas, tending to signal disagreement only indirectly, or opting rather to compromise and give in to the 'other.' They also failed to show explicit commitment to their ideas as they, through the overuse of down toner modal markers, reduced the degree of responsibility for the value of their proposition. This was done in an effort to possibly mitigate the force of their utterances in order to render them more acceptable to the listener and to accommodate the face of the addressee. Women also tended to adopt affiliative discursive strategies as they latched their ideas onto those of their colleagues. On the whole, they seemed to prefer the joint working out of a group point of view. Unlike most men, women were also observed serving the important conversation function of drawing other parties into the discussion as they, through the use of suggestive linguistic mechanisms and conversational questions, urged colleagues to consider alternatives. Presenting ideas, however original, in the form of propositional questions, tended to minimise their contributions.

Self-presentation through an overt display of knowledge

Regarding the display of knowledge, there was not much disparity in the way that men and women displayed their expert knowledge in their respective areas of specialisation. Men however tended to use hard technical evidence more often to back statements made with facts. They also presented themselves as custodians of institutional memory and knowledge which could be used as operating background information and a source of reference for a particular problem at hand. In presenting information, they also made a more conscious effort to frame and reference it to sound authentic and institutional. Women, on the other hand, appeared more anxious than men to come across as credible discussants and to get their information accepted as well-founded. Where men were particular about detail and facts as they constructed a forceful argument, women often had to invoke the authority of their male colleagues to support their argument. They therefore made efforts to show the relevance of the information they presented by making reference to a male discussant whose opinions were well respected. Older participants of both genders however revealed more limited use of technical terms and business discourse.

Pronoun use in self-presentation

On the subject of pronoun use, the younger men and women were observed shifting alignments and power positions in the way they used pronouns. A frequent shift in subject alignment, despite the fact that much of the alternation between *I* and *we* may be justified on semantic grounds, connote a lack of assertiveness and self assuredness. The younger men and women also showed a lack of confidence in themselves and the substance of their delivery through the high usage of the pronoun *we* which may be taken to infer that the individual speaker does not carry full accountability for the proposition made. In this way, they failed to affirm legitimate power where most other men came through as being both certain and emphatic.

The support versus leader role

Regarding the support versus leader role in meetings, women were observed displaying a range of linguistic and discursive practices that placed them in a supportive role in conversation as they, for example, gave constant attention to the speaker on the floor through

use of minimal responses, readily filled in gaps for the other and supportively shared the floor, speaking rights and turn taking as they moved towards a group formulated decision. Frequent use of cooperative strategies and playing the facilitator of discussions, however, resulted in women appearing as less capable, less confident and less able to hold their own in debates in mixed groups. Men on the other hand clearly positioned themselves in the leader role in the way that they tended to evaluate issues before debate, challenged the propositions made by others and tended to propose solutions before discussion or analysis- in themselves, non-supportive ways of exhibiting control over decision making processes. By not aligning their ideas with those of other speakers in obvious ways, men appeared to be less concerned about resolving discussion and coming up with a common view.

Self-presentation in problem-solving

There were marked differences in the way men and women approached problem solving. Men tended to control the process around problem-solving by producing more utterances to establish operating procedures, assessing the progress of debate and asking evaluating questions. Women on the other hand tended to produce suggestions to generate alternative solutions to the problem under discussion, displayed a high degree of creativity and tolerance for diverse thinking and built in an element of assessment to their analysis of a particular problem. Unlike men, who tended to produce more negative evaluations of the solutions presented by others, male or female, women were more likely to make positive evaluations, often towards the end of discussion. Women's concern for clear outcomes more often generated solutions and their style of talk influenced more efficient problem solving and facilitated closure on issues.

Face management in meetings

With regard to face management, younger men and women presented themselves in ways that were different to how the more experienced and older men and women did. It was noted that as a face saving strategy, women tended to openly acknowledge the existence of hierarchical and professional interdependance in meetings by often placing themselves in the subordinate position to their colleagues as a way of confirming an interdependent relationship. It was also noted that women tended to use hedges extensively and minimised their own contributions through self effacing talk. In addition, women, more often than not, preferred not to be openly

confrontational and as a result gave in to men's positions as they refrained from defending their particular standpoint in debate. The more junior males and women in general also tended to avoid direct confrontation and adopted the use of the subjective and precautionary hedging forms, especially when they sought to modify an opinion expressed by a more senior member such as the chair and to uphold his face. The men who had been in the company for a longer period showed a tendency to want to challenge others through aggressive posturing and put-downs. This often characterised male to male talk. Women, on the other hand, were more polite in their verbal behaviour wishing perhaps to preserve a certain degree of autonomy within which they had freedom of action and the right not to be imposed upon. Another reason for their preoccupation with the maintenance of face could be their concern over what others may think of them as well as fear of direct confrontation.

Doing collegiality as a self-presentation strategy

Men and women were noted using different methods of cultivating a congenial atmosphere in meetings. Men were observed enacting solidarity amongst themselves as they often showed appreciation for one another's ideas, affirmed the thinking expressed by fellow males, often addressed other male colleagues of equal status and age by first name and generally created an enabling environment for members of their own gender. Younger women on the other hand were observed seemingly seeking to use 'male' speech styles and discursive strategies to fit in with the identified social norms of the group. Women were also noted adopting interactional behaviours that are often associated with women, such as engaging in 'small talk' and generally taking care of others.

Humour in the boardroom

Humour in the boardroom tended to remain a male preserve, as only men occasionally used this multi-purpose discursive strategy and directed their wisecracking at other males. Women did not themselves use humour in meetings but when men resorted to this backstage language behaviour, women laughed modestly.

Paralinguistic features in self-presentation

Younger women were noted particularly failing to take up space and to make their presence felt, failing to maintain a posture in keeping with their role and failing to use their voice to sound assertive and as powerful as the role status they held, resulting in some of their ideas being usurped by their more forceful, but not necessarily more capable male counterparts.

5.5 Insights from the focus group discussions

5.5.0 Introduction

In this section, I discuss the varied insights of women's experiences as they relate to the two macroareas examined above. The insights and extracts cited are drawn from the focus group discussions that were part of the methodology of this research as discussed above in 4.2.5. Much reliance was placed on the tenets of CDA which, as a social science, allows explicit focus by the analyst on those who suffer most from the inequalities of society. As discussed in 3.9 above, discourse, communication and other forms of action and interaction are monitored by social cognition. Although embodied in the minds of individuals, social cognitions are social because they are shared and presupposed by group members. By analysing the talk that came out of the FGDs, I aim to unravel the ways in which discourses and interactional behaviour signal and influence socially shared knowledge, ideologies opinions, biases and attitudes that may exist within a group of men and women interacting in senior management meetings and how these affect the same.

The discussions and responses in these forums were guided primarily by the interview format (see Appendix B) and also questions following on from the flow of the conversation that allowed for a free flow of discussions and responses were subsequently examined in light of the two macroareas that emerged from the data (conversation management and self-presentation), analysed and presented in 5.3 and 5.4 above.

5.5.1 Observations and comments on conversation management

In relation to how men and women managed conversation within the boardroom, respondents were generally in agreement that given the various linguistic strategies available, men were, compared to women, better able to control both the content and progress of discussion.

Asked if they were conscious of their gender in meetings, most women confirmed that they were, as they were numerically outnumbered by men in some instances to the ratio of 1:10. This had a direct bearing on how the interaction was organised, who had greater claim to the floor, who had more speaking 'rights' and whose contributions were recorded more often. A female financial director (Marlo) felt

> *There is no way you can forget you are a woman as the discussions are almost on gender lines. They have a way of controlling conversation so that only their topics take centre stage and they get the support of their colleagues too.*

The point made by the female financial director about men was echoed by other women. Fiona and Margaret discussed further how it was that because they were heavily outnumbered, men's voices were heard more often and as a result, they dominated debate, passing turns to their friends who proceeded to speak for as long a turn as the one before them and often repeating the idea expressed in different words. This claim is supported by the findings about turn nomination where it was found that men often passed on a turn to a colleague by very direct means either by calling on his name or by turning to face the colleague as a turn management cue (see 5.3.3 for a fuller discussion of the findings). In the same discussion group, a younger woman (Chipo) criticised how men monitored and regulated the talk of others as she had, in a recent meeting, been challenged by a male colleague to summarise her point and show the relevance of her line of argument to ongoing debate and yet men had often been allowed to waffle for long periods. She also commented on how men used discursive strategies that gave them authority and credibility as they displayed specialist knowledge in very obvious ways;

> *You see they like to put themselves as 'knowers of everything'. Even the way they like to walk about and hustle at work and look very busy.*

Another respondent (Judy) added how men

> *…can speak loud, above everyone else and blot out everyone else depending on how they view them. I have noticed how they do not do that when Mr Mandengu is on the floor (laughter). For the benefit of those who do not know who this gentleman is, he is chief whip on our board (more laughter).*

In this way, as discussed above in 5.3.4 they managed to overlap the speech of others and to have their discussion ratified as legitimate as other participants were compelled to expand on their ideas. The discussants, as noted in my findings above also noted how men, mostly the more senior in terms of position or age, tended to interrupt other speakers male or female by interjecting boldly, speaking over another's voice, or through using the language of the backstage by for example, passing a disruptive or disparaging comment which often resulted in the addressee faltering in their presentation. One respondent commented

> *I get annoyed when people do not listen to another speaker to the end. When people butt in when someone is speaking, it gives the impression that they think they know better.*

A young man who was part of the discussion group commented that he could identify with the opinion being expressed as he had also felt the same.

> *It's mostly madhara (old men) who do that and it can be off-putting. Its really part of the politics of interaction - who gets allowed to speak in the boardroom and whose views get heard and are discussed at length*

The same young man however suggested that women needed to form a kind of alliance in which they would look out for each other and make sure that their interests and concerns were heard and debated equally extensively. From the discussion in 5.3.5 above, women were already doing this as they 'chained' their ideas onto each other's and tried to form speech enclaves. Both men and women also agreed that there were other subtle ways used by men in particular, to assert themselves and control the flow of meetings. One female banker (Maud) pointed out that

> *Those who have a long track record in the boardroom have become boardroom 'politicians'. They know how to play the power game and emerge as the more influential members of the meeting. They will ask all the*

> *questions and direct the course of the meeting and force the chair to listen to them.*

There was general agreement that this had a bearing on how members were perceived and women questioned themselves on why they failed to position themselves forcefully and strategically in meetings. By way of comment, the Deputy Director of the women's law centre who had been invited to participate in the FGDs (referred to in 4.2.5) expressed how she, as a female lawyer representing women in a previously male dominated profession had been forced to set aside her personality and adopt a persona more in keeping with the workplace. She explained how she had learnt to speak more forcefully and less as a facilitator of communication, where before she had always considered how the addressee would feel about what she had to say.

> *That way, I have got people to take me more seriously. Personality is at the core of how we communicate in the work environment and how we are perceived.*

The comment by the female lawyer corroborates my findings discussed in 5.4.7 above that women tended to use attenuated and modalised speech more than men and could as a result be characterised as relatively less powerful.

5.5.2 Observations and comments on self-presentation

The discussions around how men and women presented themselves in meetings were in part contradictory to the evidence and attempted explanations that came out of the analysis above. This could be because how one views oneself and the perception of others could be diametrically opposed. Asked if women felt that they presented themselves competently, most replied in the affirmative. One respondent (Mary) who was possibly 40 years old, had this to say:

> *I think I speak well in meetings…I manage to get my points across with ease but that is also because I have been in this post for a while.*

Most women felt however that they found themselves taking on a more cooperative and facilitative role in discussions through how they positioned their ideas but this was not to say
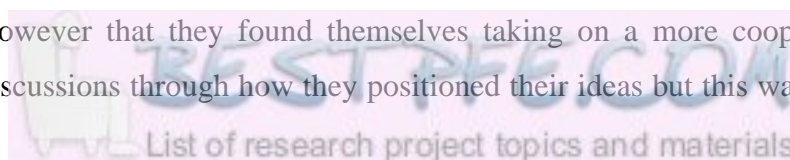
that they were not effective in their communication. One respondent (Maina) admitted that she often found herself speaking in such a way as to be considerate to the opinions of others.

> *I find myself asking questions about things that I really know a lot about but for some reason I do not state my position firmly. I always find myself thinking about what the other people will think and say about what I say. It's something I need to learn to do. I think it's because we are afraid to be wrong about things in a room full of men and young men hustling for power.*

One of the women (Faith) also pointed out how she felt that women in general did not sound 'forceful' in the way they presented themselves and she attributed this to the way she was brought up. Here is what she had to say:

> *I believe as women we actually disadvantage ourselves in the way we do not sound forceful and direct when we speak. I often wonder why this is so. In fact I think it's to do with the environment we find ourselves in after so many years of talking and behaving in a different way.*

It was noted and could be inferred from the data that because women often sounded tentative and non threatening possibly as a way of taking care of the face needs of others, their ideas were either not debated further or usurped by other participants who then claimed those ideas as theirs (the idea of setting up an office in Kenya is a case in point (see Appendix A). I also noted that their discourse, while to some extent institutional, was not strictly professional. They also preferred, it seemed, to soften their utterances. They did this through the use of epistemic modals which reduce the force of the message, thereby again taking account of the face needs of the addressee. One of the more mature respondents (Dorothy) conceded that her upbringing was standing in the way of her being a more effective communicator. She explained how

> *I cannot suddenly be abrasive because I am now sitting in a management meeting. Sometimes I find it hard to adjust between the two roles. I must project my self more forcefully especially when I am talking one on one with someone older than me male or female.*

Women participating in the debate further confirmed their paradox to one another that, by sounding bold and emphatic, one could be interpreted as rude and disrespectful of others, an observation made 1.6 above. What comes through in the comment above is that women seem to have their own understanding of what constitutes effective communication which is

however contradictory to the linguistic and discursive practices in public places where talk has status enhancing value (see 1.5 above). There was general consensus however that one did not 'sound sincere or convincing' if ownership of the idea expressed was not boldly claimed which could have critical consequences in the workplace where talk is potentially status enhancing (see discussion under 1.5)

One woman (Anesu) commented:

> *I have learnt to speak like a banker, to use the appropriate terminology and I believe that when one does that, they also sound more professional, the way Robert and Sandile speak*

To which a young man (Sandile) commented:

> *It is true. The world of business is still male dominated and for some time to come it will be the ways of speech of the dominant group that will be considered as the norm. I would say that women in managerial position have to, at least for the time being learn to speak and even take on some of the behaviours of men in meetings.*

It was also noted that women did not fully appreciate that by assuming the role of facilitator of discussions, they appeared apologetic and less able to present their ideas in mixed group interaction. The scenario was compared to, and an analogy drawn between observed interactions among couples as respondents acknowledged how they, as wives and girlfriends in mixed company, often adopted affiliative conversation strategies which included, as confirmed by my findings, speaking topically, chaining one's ideas to the previous speaker's and not interrupting the turns of others. The women confirmed how they for example, attached their ideas onto those of their male companions, presented their contributions as questions so as not to sound assuming and were mindful not to speak as much as their men folk. Professor Gaidzanwa, who was part of the group invited to participate in the FGDs commented as follows:

> *This is how most of us were socialised at home and in the mission schools we attended and it takes a conscious effort to move away from that mould.*

Other issues discussed and linked to how women presented themselves in meetings related to how the message was formulated and how this derived from the voice used to express a point

or opinion; how women failed to claim space by how and where they sit in meetings and how women remain on the outside of the inner circle by a process of subtle exclusion. Asked why women tended to sit far down the table from where the chair sat, one young respondent pointed out that she had not actually realised the significance of where one sat in a meeting. Another explained that by the time she got into the boardroom, most of the seats further up the table would have been taken. A male respondent (Fortune) made an observation drawn from the many meetings he had attended at his company and elsewhere, that failure by both men and women to position themselves strategically in relation to where the chair was sitting, and speaking from behind other people or from a far end corner of the room, had resulted in many worthy ideas and opinions remaining in the periphery. Women also discussed how they were failing to present themselves as 'one of them.' Martha, a respondent, commented how for example,

> *Because we do not play golf and we do not go out on business lunches much, we are therefore absent at the forums and meetings where the core issues of the business are discussed and business deals are clinched. In my experience and from what I can sense, we are very often merely ratifying agreements made elsewhere.*

On this point, women acknowledged that they needed to think more strategically as perhaps their male counterparts did. One of the males (Fortune) commented further:

> *By absenting yourselves from these meeting places, you as women do miss out on the opportunity to learn certain managerial behaviours which in my opinion give most males who might be less experienced and even less competent compared to you all, a head start.*

Another point discussed at length related to the importance of voice projection. Women commented on how their failure to appreciate the importance of good voice projection had resulted in many worthy ideas and opinions failing to attract the attention they deserved. Thabani (F) had this to say:

> *I can't say that I use my voice effectively in meetings. So many times I find that as I am still speaking, someone else, usually male, raises their voice and drowns mine and whatever point I was trying to make is lost. It's really frustrating.*

They also remarked on how men used their deep voices more effectively to intimidated the soft spoken speaker on the floor. Excerpt 21 is an example of this and women participants

generally agreed that this was a phenomenon that they had all noticed and one that they needed to be mindful of.

5.5.3 Coping strategies

As part of the concluding phase of the focus group discussions, the women participants sought to find ways and strategies to manage their shared experiences around the boardroom. In this regard, the FGDs, as a research method which facilitated the capturing of 'critical incidents' (Flanagan, 1949, 1954) and 'memorable messages' (Stohl, 1983) of female managers' experiences - incidents which were perceived to have had a major and continuing influence on the individuals' lives - proved invaluable. From the interactions I had with the respondents, it appeared that there were three options open to women managers in the boardroom. These are: 'rebellion', conformity, and creative individualism. Rebellion means rejecting the traditional and expected norms of gender in the way that women would 'normally' be expected to perform their roles in business. Conformity means accepting the definition of management as referring to male behaviours as the norm and adopting subservient roles in management behaviours as expected; and creative individualism refers to how individuals can accept some norms and how they then find other means of 'survival' in the workplace by manipulating and subverting those norms by plaing to their own strengths. A few of the subjects who had resorted to open rebellion against their traditional gender-role and had adopted some of the linguistic features often used by men soon learnt that open conflict in the boardroom did not work in their favour. One subject (Miriam) said:

> *I tried open confrontation and doing the things men did, like being boorish but I soon learnt that would not get me anywhere because I was soon labelled irrational, emotional and even unprofessional whereas men could be exactly that and people actually admired them for it.*

There were exceptions however. In a pharmaceutical company visited in the preliminary phase of the research, a young woman (Pedzisai), whose role is floor manager, and whom the MD had highly commended, said that she had learnt to stand up for herself and demand to be heard. She had rebelled against gender based expected norms of behaviour and this had proved successful in her case. This is what she had to say:

> *I was advised right from the start to play them at their own game… and be less of a woman. When I get onto the factory floor, I strip myself of all femininity, no earrings no lipstick no nothing and I use their form of language better than they can. That way there are no misunderstandings about my role and who I am.*

This female manager had learnt to use non-professional backstage modes of communication in keeping with her role function. She had learnt to speak and behave like the men over whom she was a manager. She however, explained how when she attended meetings with other line managers, she had to do a personality switch, but as indicated by her MD, she was more assertive in meetings compared to her female counterparts, perhaps in itself, an instance of assimilated behaviour.

The majority of the women who had made the choice to conform to the definition of manager by enacting masculine behaviours in moderation were however still perceived negatively. Women enacting cross gender behaviours were often put to ridicule and perhaps compromised their chances for promotion as they 'were viewed as too ambitious' (male FDG respondent, John). Interesting anecdotes were exchanged by the subjects who participated in the FGDs. One subject described how she had earned herself the nickname 'Attila the Hun'. Another explained that if women behaved too independently or assertively in the way they spoke, they were labelled as aggressive, offensive and brusque. Other women interviewed feared that they had undergone a personality transformation in the process of adopting masculine management behaviours in order to be taken seriously. One respondent (Margaret) had this to say:

> *I am not sure I like who I have become. I think I have become harsh even to my children and do not laugh as much as I used to. I always seem to be on guard. Once or twice I have caught myself imagining how my male peers would put a point across and I find myself trying to emulate that. I must say that I don't like it.*

The majority of women, who had been in management positions for much longer, compared to the rest, had decided to adopt the creative individualism strategy. One subject felt she had *gained more mileage this way*. They conducted themselves according to male expectations of female management styles which would include not being too confrontational, not sounding too confident and all too powerful. Through use of this strategy it was argued, some women managers have gained implicit power and control of their situations by appearing and sounding

friendly, accommodative, supportive and not combative. One female general manager interviewed suggested this choice was in response to male ego needs. She explained how:

> *At times I allow male colleagues to think they have all the control; but the key is they have to come back to you, sometimes even after the meeting is over to clarify issues or explain why they spoke the way they did. When it suits my purposes, I let them go on a little ego-trip.*

Women preferring to use creative individualism as a strategy had also found a way of getting their ideas, perspectives and decisions carried out in organisations by *simply being who we are* and finding creative ways around their problems in the boardroom by adopting a blend of masculine and feminine management styles. This way, it was generally felt, *we can get men to do whatever we wish them to do by simply emphasising our femininity by just using the magic phrases; would you please...*Some women managers had therefore resorted to using modulated requests as opposed to the more managerial and functional directive '*this is what you need to do and this is how I want it done'* (Mullins, 1999). One respondent (Amy) argued that though this was a more straightforward and peer level mode of communication, it was however one that men were not likely to be attuned to, especially when the directive was from a woman. Another (Gillian) explained that her chief objective was to engineer the intended outcome, and that once one set up the outcomes of any interaction, then that was control, regardless of how this was achieved. Yet another subject (Shungu (F) explained her *winning* strategy as

> *...letting a male peer believe that the idea he reformulates during the meeting was his, in order to have your idea incorporated into the organisation.*

This bit of wisdom, she explained, had come after much reflection. Most women, she argued, had eventually discovered the power of being 'powerless' by using submissive feminine stereotype discursive practices. This subordination process of adopting behavioural and discursive practices that are deferential towards men appeared an accepted practice amongst most women. This way, one respondent argued, 'female managers gained power by allowing others to appear more powerful'. This, she explained, was a survival technique, an argument supported by Mumby and Clair (2000). Because men still held the higher percentage of those who sit in boardrooms and 'have a lot of clout and power over how far women can go' (Judy, FGD respondent), most women saw apparent and strategic compromise as 'the best option for

survival'. While this choice may appear both naïve and problematic as discussed by Van Dijk (1993a) and Margolis and Mauser (1989), the woman proponent however believed that

> *the short term compromise would facilitate long term goals of getting more women to sit on boards and ultimately achieve real changes in the definition of manager…*

and the ways in which women fit that description. Women also argued that while getting the chance to speak is fundamental to getting one's ideas into the discourse, sheer amount of talk is not a sufficient drive or measure of the extent to which one's ideas are entered into the discourse. One senior lady (Felicity) argued further that people recognised by others as having sufficient knowledge and power, however they express that knowledge, will have others speaking their ideas for them and they remain the principals or persons whose ideas are discussed. It was pointed out however that this form of interaction expresses and preserves part of the cultural system of power and privilege that has resulted in women being disenfranchised from equal participation in the boardroom. It was my observation however that older women tended to use the discursive behaviours of the boardroom more effectively and that the meetings were as a result, more willing to ratify their contributions.

Two of the younger women involved in the research explained how they had found a creative way to be heard, and for their opinions and contributions to be noted. To use Sunderland's (2002:129) expression, women and some men had intelligently adopted 'compensatory communication strategies'. They had come to realise that they could push their ideas into the operations of the business or organisation by following through their contributions made in the boardroom with an e-mail to all members present, reiterating the same, a strategy which they said guaranteed ownership of their ideas and had been adopted by a few younger males and those not so outspoken and vocal as the rest.

Although the women in this study seemed to be living a paradox by, on the one hand, appearing to avoid success or conflict by striving for approval from their colleagues and at the same time wishing to climb to higher echelons within the organisations they work in, women may be perceived this way because gender-type behaviours are often analysed from a male perspective. Men and the traditional analysts continue to define the management role in male terms and want women to act like men. The subjects in the FGDs said they had learned to use old stereotypical behaviours for new reasons, that is, to persuade organisational men into

listening to them and thereby gain power. They had resorted to hiding a great deal of their personalities from men and used extensively supportive strategies for compliance-gaining, a basic relationship style which Haley (1963) termed meta-complementarity. This is a term used to describe a relationship that appears to be complementary but which is in fact, reverse complementary. The person who seems to be in the less powerful position has ultimate control by letting the apparently powerful person believe he is making all the decisions. As Haley (1963:12) explains, 'the person who establishes a meta-complementary relationship with another is controlling the manoeuvres of the other'. It can be argued therefore that the female subjects in the FGDs, who are in this case the publicly less powerful persons, gain and exert power through strategies that do not undermine the image of the more powerful for the present. By balancing the satisfaction of their own positive and negative face needs with the face needs of other interactants, they remain unscathed in the power game while managing to push their agenda.

It was interesting to note however, that of the men involved in the discussion, the majority were aware of the power strategies they used in the boardroom and the effects these had on their female interlocutors. The board chair of a chemical manufacturing company confessed that he had, on more than one occasion, having realised how a potentially good idea was about to be thrown out before debate, stepped in to overtly support a female colleague who was on the floor as he witnessed how she was being bulldozed because she had failed to present her idea more forcefully. Overt display of support from the chair or someone from a role status perceived as higher, as discussed in the case of Thabani mentioned in the discussion in 5.4.4, was also cited in three other instances related to two younger females and one male all of whom had experienced difficulty in trying to stay on the floor and make their point succinctly. Another male participant (Chisha), wishing to make the point that failing to keep the floor had little to do with being a woman, observed how a young male manager (Sales and Service), who was evidently viewed as a low achiever by his colleagues and was struggling in his new portfolio, had been saved by the group accountant, who was female and not much older than him, by urging the other members of the board to:

> *Give him a chance. He could have been inefficient in the past but going forward, let's not judge him on his past performance and let's move forward*

At which point order had been restored.

What was particularly interesting about this discussion was that women were aware of their limitations in the way they managed conversation and presented themselves in discussion in public fora. They had each come up with strategies of coping with the situations they faced. Ironically, most of them were of the opinion that behaving according to the female stereotype and sounding and appearing collaborative and non combative had made it possible for them to achieve their objectives.

5.6   Correlation between talk and power

In this section, I discuss the significance of talk in public fora and how such talk has a marked social and political function, as contributions in meetings generally have a status enhancing potential. As Holmes (1992, 1997) argues, the value of talk lies in that it can be used as a resource on which power and dominance are based. Power can be defined as 'an asymmetric social dimension of relative power' (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This means that in an interaction, the speaker can be characterised as relatively more or less powerful than the addressee. It can be argued therefore that there is a strong correlation between language use and influence, symbolic power and success. As argued in 2.10 above, the crucial implication of this correlation is that it implies control over the minds of other people in order to get their consensus and acceptance of one's agenda.

Effective power in the boardroom is enacted by persuasion or manipulation among other strategic ways to change the minds of others. Thus while the primary function of talk may be to convey information, exactly what one says and how the information is packaged has a social function specifically to signal and possibly increase the status of the speaker. As a result, it is those participants who are able to exercise their rights to speak who successfully contest power, are quoted more often and in the process gain more visibility and arguably (Van Dijk, 1993b) better access to positions of influence. Consequently, access to discourse and communication in asymmetrical, group or public fora is closely linked to power. Interpersonal communication in relation to power is therefore both medium and meaning. It is a medium because power flows along its channels and it is meaning because intention drives it. Communication thus provides a means through which power can be brought to bear, developed, upheld and enhanced.

Another significant outcome of interactional communication (as discussed in 2.9 above) is the notion of power and its distribution. CDA highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power in a given context. This, as Fairclough and Wodak (2000) argue, is partly a matter of how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse. In addition to the question of power *in* discourse, is the question of power *over* discourse. This is in part, a matter of access (discussed earlier in 2.10). The chairperson in a meeting for example, can use the floor extensively or control access to it. Less powerful participants have access that is more limited and can be more controlled by co-participants. Furthermore, power over discourse is a question of the capacity to control and change the ground rules of discursive practices, and the structure of the order of the discourse itself in a way which makes it possible to have one's ideas accepted and one's criticism of another supported. This consequently constructs high level meetings as a powerful political platform for some. This discussion suggests further that discursive aspects of power relations are not fixed. Through the use of CDA, it has been possible to focus upon the discursive reproduction of power relations, power struggles and the transformation of power relations. The reason for examining communication strategies in senior management meetings to test and analyse differences should therefore be apparent.

The discussions above (under sections 5.3 and 5.4) have revealed that interactants can have power over discourse (conversation management) and power in how they present themselves (self-presentation) and that the sequencing of talk and discursive practices are generally negotiated and contested processes. This results partly in an ongoing hegemonic struggle in discourse and over discourse.

In examining how men and women interacted in senior management meetings as they discussed business within their different organisations and different settings, it emerged therefore, that talk at this level is seldom neutral in terms of power. As Bloom (1990), cited in 2.9 above, concluded, men and women perceive and act on power differently and because of this difference, power impacts on the structure and nature of interaction in gender specific ways. What has come out of the analysis above is that there are factors that constrain the types of power and influence strategies men and women produce in the workplace. Through observation and analysis, it was clearly evident that there were marked variations in the way

men and women negotiated power relations in meetings by means of the discourse strategies they used.

In the management of conversation, there were noticeable differences in, for example, the way men used bold interactional strategies which positioned them as the more powerful as they expressed themselves with more dynamism. Men also appeared more competent, as they formulated their points more directly and took on the roles of professional discussants as they used the institutional discourse of meetings, while their female counterparts tended to use less bold speech strategies, like the chaining or latching on of their ideas onto those of a former speaker, which rendered their contributions less powerful and less likely to be taken as original. As a result, they appeared less authoritative and perhaps less capable, while their male colleagues portrayed themselves as the holders of original and expert knowledge which correlates with power.

Women were also noted as preferring the more culturally appropriate ways of talking, for instance, the use of attenuated speech, down toner modal markers and the use of other cooperative politeness strategies that are essentially affiliative strategies and primarily serve the purpose of upholding the face of the other. This way of talking would reflect their expected subordinate role in traditional Zimbabwean culture. Speaking tentatively, side-stepping firm commitment and the lack of statement or appearance of strong opinions are ways of speaking that are not very effective in getting others to think or do what the speaker wants them to. Men were further observed placing themselves in control of topic as well as discussion by for example, the way they summarised, reformulated or spoke over the ideas of others in the course of meetings, explicitly strategies of interactional control. Women on the other hand were observed for instance, frequently failing to hold the floor and giving in to interruptions, failing to forcefully self-select themselves at transition relevant places and therefore failing to control or influence topic selection and development.

The relation between power and conversation management strategies which led to dominance of women by their male colleagues was also noted as men colluded to give other men more opportunities to gain floor space. They listened intently when one of them had the floor, laughed at their jokes and answered their questions more directly. Male members who had the floor called on other members and formed a network among themselves. Those with perceived lowly social status within the boardroom thus had a harder time getting the floor,

and once there, received less attention and cooperation. Having the floor, as a result, becomes less attractive for those with less social status and they gradually withdraw from debate as noted in some instances referred to above. What is important about this observation is not simply that status determines who gets to talk more. The issue is that more access to talk, as alluded to in 2.10 and in the FGDs, is central to the actual construction of status which is associated with social hierarchy and that construction is unwittingly a collaborative affair. This means that whoever talks more frequently may also define the talking space and influence power relations within boardrooms.

In examining the correlation between self-presentation and power, it was evident that it was those participants who managed to present themselves positively and with vitality that emerged as the more powerful interlocutors. Men were for example observed and analysed positioning themselves as originators of ideas as they introduced and controlled topics, explicitly demonstrated ownership of the information they expressed, were emphatic and sought to position themselves as the more legitimate and powerful interlocutors. This was evident by the way they for instance, sounded deterministic, imported relevant information, played the leader role and sounded assured of themselves. Women on the other hand were observed resorting to conflict avoidance based strategies to steer clear of both social and professional discomfort and inadvertently placed themselves in the subordinate position to their male counterparts. Through an over-use of down-toners and other forms of face management strategies and the adoption of the role of facilitator of conversation and recipient of information, women tended to present themselves as lesser participants without much authority.

Another issue of concern is the use of overt and covert markers of hierarchy and power asymmetry in institutional discourse where power relations are unequal. It was observed that the more authoritative participants controlled conversation mechanisms like turn taking and topic through their control of the question-response-assessment cycle. It was also noted that the more powerful interactant in an asymmetrical relationship could determine the nature of the discussion, adopt certain rights such as initiating topics and asking information seeking questions, while the less powerful tended to use the more indirect 'face' sensitive forms referred to by Brown and Levinson (1987). Where overt markers of power were less evident, covert markers of asymmetry became more potent with the result that the power asymmetry became more subtle. As discussed in the post-recording interviews, the person whose version

is recorded in the minutes emerges as the more knowledgeable and hence more powerful than even perhaps the originator of the idea. Exploitation of the floor in this way and the use of formulating rights as well as evaluation of another speaker's contribution can be viewed as a way of exercising asymmetrical control (as discussed above in 5.3.7). As Fairclough (1992) argues, covert mechanisms of control can be used to greater effect by power holders and gatekeepers in conversation, to exercise control and power over others.

Drawing upon notions of CDA (as discussed in Chapter 3), and cognitive psychology, it can be argued that when people talk to each other, they are engaged in an important political activity in which existing power relations dictate the way in which social reality is renegotiated amongst participants. Discourse is always embedded in context and cannot therefore be appreciated without taking the context into consideration. Utterances are only meaningful if their use is considered in a specific situation. The underlying conventions and rules must be understood and the culture and ideology in which they are embedded recognised from a CDA perspective, to presuppose certain worlds of experience. These claims were corroborated during the member checking stage of the research when a female respondent (Sheilah and 56 years old) described her experiences in the corporate world. This is what she had to say:

> *Ask me, I have been around the block a number of times. If you want your idea to be taken up by the business, find yourself a male whose views are well respected for him to present your idea for you. I tried doing it myself and I learnt my lesson the hard way. Some men were yawning and made no attempt to hide it. One was even looking out through the window. Do not do it yourself. Find some male who can buy into your idea and get him to present your idea.*

Experiences such as this and others described in the FGDs, may be responsible for, and explain why the women in my data were seen as struggling to present themselves more positively and to display a more competent performance and thereby authenticate their statuses, their professions and their authority. It can be argued therefore that discourse can be associated with distinctive representations of social reality and distinctive constructions of social and political relations and identities. It was further evident from the discussions in the FGDs that the way one talks, the language features that one uses and the speaker's gender all have an impact on their experiences and their perceptions of power. It was apparent in the conversations that both women and men believed that gender, especially in respect to how

they were socialised, was a relevant factor in the way they constructed their roles as communicators, and that though they might have similar skills and role descriptions, they had different perceptions of the meaning of power, its distribution and negotiation.

I want to argue therefore that gender-role socialisation affects the type of power and influence options from which men and women select in performing within the workplace. Opponents of the gender socialisation view of power argue that ultimately power and influence differentials between male and female managers emerge from organisational practice and structure. Known as the structuralist view of power, the argument which Kanter (1977) and others use (see 3 above) is that the reason women have limited power at most workplaces is not primarily due to their gender, but is due instead to their occupying 'lower' position power. My data does up to a point, support such a claim. Ten women in a data total of 29 were in public relations, human resources and training, positions generally viewed as feminine and not on par with the more highly regarded such as finance, operations and marketing. Furthermore, actual position power may not only influence the power strategies men and women select. Their perception of power may also influence their selection of strategy. Moreover, since men outnumber women in boardrooms, in some instances 1:10; this disparity necessarily leads to decreased opportunities for visibility and power for women. Whether men are aware of this disadvantage on the part of women and if so, whether they manipulate it to their advantage remains unanswered, as it does not form part of the scope of this research.

It can also be argued that gender-role socialisation ultimately empowers men by prescribing for them language that fits closely with the managerial demands of the workplace and simultaneously disadvantages women by prescribing roles and identities that are counter-productive to organisational and workplace demands. As Mead (1982) points out, one's identity in an organisation is shaped through interactions with others. People come to adopt characteristics based on the roles they are expected to play in both formal and informal contexts. The floor manager in the pharmaceutical company referred to above (see 5.5.3) is a case in point. Also how we believe others perceive us informs how we behave. However, when work roles contradict social roles, individuals are known to have experienced frustration, feelings of failure and internal conflict. Because organisational rules and norms very rarely change to suit individuals, it is usually the individual who must change to overcome 'this cognitive dissonance' (Perry, 1989). Probably, as women continue to ascend

the organisational hierarchies and gain greater position power, the differences between men and women, in the way they use influence strategies, will dissipate.

For the moment, in seeking explanations involving a power dimension, it would be simplistic to see approaches to explanations in an either/or relationship. Women's and men's subcultures are not detached from prevailing power structures. As Cameron (1985) points out, it is surely not coincidence that the conversation style associated with men is aggressive and competitive, while that associated with women is supportive and co-operative. Explanations of gender differentiated language and power need to take a sophisticated and critical view of social behaviour and social structure by looking closely at all the possible variables that may have a bearing on the nature of interaction. They also need to acknowledge the subcultures to which women and men belong and in which they internalise different interactional norms.

5.7 Research findings: an overview

The overall findings of this research showed a number of links between discourse strategies and gender orientation. These were noted and discussed above in 5.3 and 5.4.

The data did not however show significant differences between men and women debating in the boardroom regarding a variety of features generally assumed to be gender differentiated. At some of the data sites, particularly at the bank meetings, both men and women spoke with caution, were factual, citing percentages extensively and were guarded in the statements and utterances they made. In these meetings too, both men and women were polite. There was also no significant difference between the way men and women displayed expert knowledge. Both men and women appear to have found that sharing expert knowledge was a valuable mechanism of power and empowerment. Both men and women operating in corporate boardrooms also appear to have understood that one characteristic of expert knowledge is the ability to synthesise and relate things, placing them in a broader situational and historical context (as discussed earlier in 5.4.2). Many of the statements made were backed by examples, as instances in one situation were compared with similar situations in other contexts. Bankers were evidently acutely aware of comparative practices in the other banks.

There was also little difference in the discourse strategies used by the older women from those of men in the data. The female manager who was voted the divisional manager of the year 2003 and Martha the accountant at Truba Bank serve as examples of an observation which seems to suggest that immersion and assimilation processes had a bearing on the linguistic behaviour of women and possibly some of the younger men.

Perhaps the noted differences in communication styles of women and men discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4 can be attributed to the fact that while there is emancipation of women in society on the one hand, there is no concomitant change in male attitudes on the other. In more recent years in Zimbabwe, (as cited above in Chapter 1), the percentage of women in the corporate world has risen considerably. Yet although it appears that women have become emancipated or institutionally more equal, the traditional view of male dominance and superiority prevails. In fact, much as women are valued in the industrial workforce as dedicated workers (Lazar, 1993), the value of their contributions in the workplace is still shrouded and masked in the perception that men and society in general have of them.

The work environment as context of the communicative event appeared to be a significant variable in how both men and women spoke. It was noted that each workplace had unique interactional dynamics deriving in part from the organisational culture noted briefly as ethnographic detail. In the banks and insurance houses, there was a definite and recognised code of linguistic behaviour that was observed. Board meetings, regardless of the type, tended to be more formal and recognised procedures of meetings were generally followed to the letter. These organisations were markedly role and task oriented. The meetings of the touring company were in stark contrast. The code of conduct was different and some meetings more relaxed, bordering on being a free for all environment, perhaps a reflection of the industry itself. The meetings were characterised, though in varying degrees, by both men and women interrupting each other, overlapping each other, and using directives. It was not uncommon for the main meeting to run parallel with private discussions between some members, or for members to table issues within the main meeting that were not on the agenda and have them debated successfully.

An additional point noted though not discussed in detail is that the nature and personality of the chair at all the meetings observed, recorded or discussed also emerged as a significant variable. The chair, it was noted, set the atmosphere, tone and character of the meeting. In

instances where the chair followed the protocol of meetings and was firm but fair, both sexes had a fair opportunity to debate. In some instances, the chair emerged as domineering and only allowed debate over 'permitted issues.' Yet again in a number of other instances, debate was limited, as only certain individuals were given opportunities to speak, resulting in some encounters being described as limiting, unconducive to debate and not enabling, especially for the younger members sitting in these meetings. It could be argued therefore that the role of the chair can be a significant variable when looking at patterns of communication in boardrooms in relation to both men and women.

It is important to note here that the results of the research have to a large extent, reconfirmed what other researchers before have concluded as discussed in 1.5. More importantly for me, this research has confirmed the hunch I had when I set out to draw the aims. The findings have revealed important differences in the way that women and men use language. The findings have also revealed the difference that gender makes to interactional practices. I have also come to a number of conclusions with reference to the professional discourses used in the participating boardrooms. The conclusions are that:

- There exists 'genderlects', ways of speaking that can be identified as characteristic of women or of men.

- Certainly more women than men use Lakoff's hypothesised 'female register' which has been characterised as uncertain and powerless as well as interactionally courteous and affective, while men were generally noted as using more managerial behaviours, often described as independent, assertive and superior.

- Men and women use different interactional strategies in meetings. CA, which looks at how talk is conducted between participants and the way in which utterances may function, can reveal differences between women's and men's communication styles and inconsistencies in what those variables may mean.

- Theories of language and gender cannot on their own explain whatever differences may exist between men and women's speech behaviour in any boardroom. Language and its use will come to reflect the social and communicative needs of speakers as

they have developed within a particular society. As Sapir (1970) points out, language indexes the network of patterns of a culture. In so far as gender inequality can be counted as one of the significant features of our culture, we can expect this fact to be reflected in the language that people use. The study of language is in itself a guide to social reality. Culture shapes language choice and language itself shapes culture

- Various conversation features seem associated with power differences between men and women. Power has many dimensions. It is both complex and difficult to define in any one context. Power itself resolves into a variety of components such as 'expertise', 'dominance' or 'status.' It appeared the case that more women took less powerful roles in mixed interactions irrespective of their occupational status relative to their male interlocutors. Such exclusion may also mean that the less powerful are then less quoted and less spoken about, thus blocking access where it matters. As West (1984) argues, gender operates as a variable, as it was observed in most cases to impede and override other indicators of power such as professional status.

- Social identity is a fragmented and multiple phenomenon. Since men and women are positioned in many social relations, sometimes the relations are contradictory. The 'privilege' that women sitting in boardrooms enjoy is not experientially separable from the oppressive gender relations that they are also positioned in, and which equally shapes their gendered identity. Privilege and oppression can coexist and it is therefore important to recognise that every mixed group interaction can itself be an arena for potential conflict and struggle and possibly influences women's performance in the workplace.

- In practice and in principle, there are no unequivocally 'powerful' and 'powerless' people but power itself has many dimensions. It is affected by local context and it should follow that attempts at empowerment of any group cannot be uncritical.

I have also concluded that questions around the *what* and *how* of boardroom interaction can find part solution in studies of gender-socialisation processes which can provide important conceptual linkages with larger and more abstract principles in the study of communication processes. Men and women come from two sociolinguistic 'subcultures' and the subsequently

different interactional styles are associated with a difference in socialisation processes between them. Men, more so than women, can then use certain powerful strategies and features at their disposal, to dominate mixed-sex talk and hence effectively limit the communicative rights of others by for example the speech acts they use, how they control topics, how they dominate interaction or by the discourse genres they select.

Despite the data that research has accumulated about the interactional mechanisms used by men and women and the claims I have made above, I dare not conclude that I have formulated a complete and accurate differential catalogue of women's and men's language use in boardrooms. Language is a personal and private property influenced by a number of abstract concepts. Identifying the function fulfilled by a particular expression is extraordinarily difficult and inevitably rests on a subjective assessment. As Holmes (1986:18) argues, it is hard to say, in subjective categorisations, whether one is evaluating the speech or the speaker. The findings discussed above can therefore only remain what they are, noted tendencies and not definitive conclusions

I am also aware, much to my chagrin, that much as I might have tried to appraise the language choices of men and women objectively, my comments and remarks might be drawn from examining and evaluating the language register and interaction process of each, for the most part, in the context of men's language use, the framework upon which society draws its standards. Lastly, it is important to state the observation that interpretations and explanations are never finished and altogether authoritative; they are dynamic and open, to new contexts and new information.

5.8   Explaining the tendencies noted

In my view, gender-role socialisation provides the most cogent theoretical perspective to explain the observable differences in the way men and women speak in boardrooms as noted above. The gender-role socialisation perspective holds that men and women will use different kinds of strategies irrespective of their levels of position power, perceived power or educational level. Gender-role socialisation according to Coates (1984) affects perceptions about behaviour as well as influences actual behaviour. It is however impossible to empirically observe the gender role socialisation process since it occurs in what Watzlawick,

Beavin and Jackson (1967) refer to as the 'internal cognitive black box'. Internalised gender-role or psychological gender orientation is an integral part of one's self concept. At best, we can extrapolate how the process may affect the different sexes by reflecting on the different socialising agents or inputs occurring as young people grow within a society which has its own socialising processes stemming out of the different interactional contexts which in turn, act as inputs to the socialising process by organising, framing and interpreting gender-role messages. Society not only shapes the behaviour of males and females through socialisation influences, it also evaluates the resultant behaviour characteristic of masculinity and femininity, with the result that it then defines male behaviour as the norm and evaluates female behaviour against that male standard. In the context of this study, it appears that men and women embrace the role expectations for their gender and as a result, demonstrate gender appropriate values and behaviours. For the women however, this places them in a dilemma. Female socialisation places femininity and management in opposition. Women in senior management positions therefore have to cope with the paradox of being expected to display the qualities of femininity while being socialised at a secondary level into primarily masculine organisations. As a result, women often use meta-complementary relationship strategies such as making suggestions in the form of questions (5.4.2) when interacting with male colleagues. As coping strategies, they construct themselves as less powerful by allowing men to believe they are making decisions and controlling outcomes as discussed in the FGDs (see5.5.3). This however may actually act against them as it then appears that men outperform women in decision making forums such as in boardrooms. Such findings are consistent with gender-role socialisation prescriptions that women are more collaborative and men are more competitive.

In addition to the insights drawn from the analysis, FGDs and other ethnographic data, I have made an appeal to a variety of existing theories, mainly from linguistics, CA, pragmatics and CDA in an attempt to throw further light on the relationship between language and gender which could help explain the noted gender differences in the linguistic behaviour of both men and women in meetings as discussed above. Language, it has been argued, is a symptom rather than a cause of social inequality. Sapir (1970) worked on the principle of 'supreme affability' of any language which says that a language will reflect the social and communicative needs of speakers as they have developed within a particular society. This view of language is closely connected to the notions of 'context of culture' and 'context of situation' as explained by Halliday (1973). The two types of context, he argues, embody the
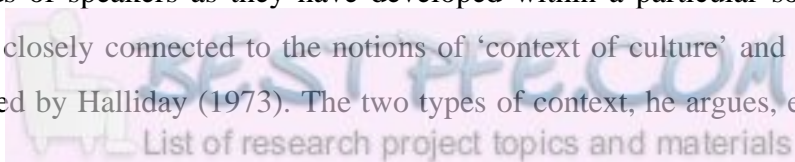
distinction between the potential and the actual. The context of culture defines the potential, the range of possibilities that are open to an individual. The actual choice among these possibilities takes place within a given context of situation. The various systemic imbalances across the gender divide in most societies in the world seems to support the mirror view of language which says that language has evolved to meet the communicative needs of its speakers within given cultures. If then, the significant outlines of a culture can be seen in the structure of its language, it can be seen even more clearly in the patterns of use. It appears therefore that there exists a strong correlation between the structure of society and patterns of language use.

Another explanation that could be proffered is that individual language styles each have a social meaning or overtone. Certain styles of speaking are regarded as feminine or masculine, as powerful or weak. Speakers in a given context and situation can choose to adopt any one combination of them in order to present themselves in a particular way such as the projection of a preferred social image or group membership. These choices are often the product of personal experiences. Subjects interviewed in the FGDs, both male and female, confirmed that they often found themselves trapped between the different patterns of linguistic behaviour required of them as they interacted with individuals from different social, cultural, and work backgrounds. It was acknowledged that individuals often made attempts to resemble those of the group or groups with which they interacted. This view of language use does not however adequately account for the systematic differences in linguistic behaviour and in this study, the correlation between language, power and status.

Yet another explanation for the noted differences in individual styles is the effect of socio-economic factors on the speech of men and women. Milroy (1980) shows for example how one's speech patterns and behaviour are affected by their position, who they speak to, how often and in what capacity. Because men more often than women hold more senior positions in most institutions, it follows therefore that gender inequalities which shape the structure of most workplaces, will mean that the majority of mixed-gender interactions at work and at this level, will be those in which the women are in less 'powerful' positions and generally fewer in number than men. Thus the traditional division of labour on gender lines at all levels and the underlying attitudes will continue to permeate into the highest levels in corporate society and to create asymmetrical power relations between men and women.

Such explanations in a way show how certain patterns of speech acquire social meaning and can be viewed as both indexical and symbolic. They are indexical in so far as a person's background leads them to speak in a certain way. It is symbolic in that the way a person speaks mirrors the social processes they have been exposed to. In this way, the manner in which a person speaks is linked to their whole being, their culture, and their membership of the social group. The association between ways of speaking and group membership then becomes significant and symbolic. Individuals will elect to talk in a certain way in order to signal their chosen or socially bestowed identity. One way in which speech styles acquire meaning therefore, is as a result of the interaction between the social behaviour of individuals and the constraints imposed on such behaviour by social structure. Individuals then position themselves and their speech in relation to others as they perceive them in the context of the social role one attributes to them.

This view of how men and women speak the way they do seems to suggest that language and social structure are co-dependant. It also implies that the communicative intentions of an individual speaker are influenced directly by external social processes. To what extent speakers are conscious of the impact of this social process on their linguistic behaviour and how far men and women deliberately conform to established gender norms remains an open question. To a large extent therefore, ideologies about who we are inform our social definitions of masculinity and femininity (Gaidzanwa, 1985) and predictive and prescriptive gendered linguistic behaviour, which says women should show gentle and nurturing behaviour while men should be dominant. These ideologies in Zimbabwe, for example, are perpetuated through a variety of means such as the educational system, the family, the law and even the church. The segregation of individuals into groups results in them assuming as well as accepting systematically different treatment. While such differences may not as a matter of course lead directly to inequality, they may very well serve the role of marking gender as an important social division, placing individuals clearly in one category or other which subsequently has a pervasive but profound bearing on, amongst other factors, the linguistic conduct of men and women.

A closer look at institutions themselves as workplaces may also help in understanding how their ideologies and character enforce particular kinds of linguistic behaviour. Milroy (1980), claims that institutions of whatever nature endorse ideologies about language and how it should be used. Sarangi and Roberts' (1999) argument that institutional language is not much

more than having a mastery of the language of the institution or the workplace (see 2.2) implies therefore that a sense of authority can be attached to the use of language. This seems to introduce the idea that there is an acceptable and empowering, and an unacceptable and disempowering way to use language in given contexts and that those who fail to use the 'acceptable' version are deemed the lesser. This is because perceptions about the expected behaviour of women in society will often reflect men's assumptions and prejudices. Furthermore, as Spender (1985) and others assert, society defines male behaviour as the norm and evaluates female behaviour against that male standard.

What makes research in this area even more interesting is that it could be argued that women who have attained positions of power in institutions which have historically been controlled by men will be those who have adopted traditional patriarchal values within the boardroom, where a masculine culture prevails. What has emerged in this research however is that the majority of the women have not adopted wholesale, the linguistic behaviour characteristic of being masculine, preferring it seems to use 'female registers' which are in the main, not the appropriate language associated with competitive debate in public spheres of influence and power. This would then lead to a general image and perception of women as poor institutional communicators, particularly in the boardroom, and a general devaluing of their linguistic competence.

A final point relates to the explanation of gender differences in talk in terms of differences in power between women and men. Women have often been regarded as a powerless social group, not just in studies of male/female interaction but also in more general studies on the position of women in society (Gaidzanwa, 1985). It has been argued widely that both women and men see men as the dominant sex, so that even when gender is not a relevant factor in an interaction, men still tend to dominate. As a case in point, West's (1984) study of a female doctor and male patient in which the male patient sets himself as initiator of dialogue in the interview is pertinent. The dominance theory in itself raises a number of interesting questions at the workplace. Could their perceived status be due to the fact that on average, men hold more powerful positions in our society; or alternatively that, all other things being equal, women have less chance than men to occupy positions of authority and that therefore women are heavily outnumbered at the levels where decisions are made? Does the perceived male dominance impact on the way individuals negotiate their social identities, including gender as well as their professional identities?

While many studies have shown that men's interests and topics tend to be better served than women's in mixed conversations (as for example in Fishman's (1978a, 1978b) study mentioned above in 5.3.5 where topics initiated by men are more often followed up and pursued), it is likely that both men and women contribute to this state of affairs. In societies where it is seen as the norm that men initiate and censor topics of discussion, modulate ideas in response to actual or anticipated reactions of others, dominate talk and are expected to speak in a certain style and manner, they may do so with the complicity of women. This argument would apply also to other asymmetrical relationships such as that between a priest and a parishioner or a doctor and a patient. When someone's power is sanctioned as legitimate, it is unlikely that it will be contested. Instead, all parties in the given interaction will contribute to its maintenance. If therefore inequalities in talk between men and women are regarded as normal by all parties, they are likely to be resistant to change and men are therefore more likely to continue to be characterised as relatively more powerful discussants than women in boardrooms. This would be endorsed further by O'Barr and Atkins' (1980) observation that the tendency for women to speak powerless language and for men to speak less of it, is in part a reflection of the speech behaviour of their social status. Similarly for men, a greater tendency to use the more powerful variant may be linked to the fact that men much more often tend to occupy relatively powerful positions in society and the perceived high status positions at the work place (as discussed above in 5.6).

In time to come, as the playing field levels out and more women not only sit in boardrooms across the big conglomerates but also create big organisations themselves, women managers may then not have to compromise their strengths to have influence, but will be able to choose the behaviours that suit their distinct personalities and positions and influence the culture of the boardroom more, rather than abide by gender stereotypes.

CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSION

6.0   Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I present a summary of the main findings of my interpretation and explanation in chapter 5. I begin by considering the argument that language is indeed not a neutral medium, but a social construct influenced by different variables, such as context. I then refer to my research questions described in 1.3 in order to link my findings to the questions and give an overview of the observed tendencies of how women and men use different linguistic features in a context in which power and cultural identity may produce gendered behaviour. This is followed by a brief discussion of the contributions that this research can make to sociolinguistic research in a Southern African context. The discussion also focuses on how the findings could influence studies in applied linguistics. I then outline the limitations of the study. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how the findings of this research can be influential in the generation of other possible areas for further studies in the use of language in areas of influence.

As Hayachi (1997) points out, looking at language critically is a way of making the invisible world visible. It is a way of questioning, observing and analysing the existing phenomena, which can very often be taken for granted. It is a way of helping people to become more sensitive to language, more aware of the sociolinguistic worlds they inhabit, and to be more critical of them. Based on this assumption, this research analysed the linguistic and interactional mechanisms used in senior management meetings in four Zimbabwean companies from the perspective of how women and men position their ideas in meetings. The research sought to test the notion that there might be a difference in the way women and men as interactants in management meetings use various mechanisms in talk-in-interaction, with a view to understanding their importance in the performance of various functions and meanings within management practice at the workplace.

6.1 Summary of findings

The overall findings of the research revealed a number of tendencies that were representative of gender stereotypes, and most of the claims and findings were similar to those of other researchers in the field of language and gender cited in studies by e.g. Edelsky, 1981; Graddol and Swann, 1989; Schink Case, 1988; Woods, 1988 (see1.5). My research findings, as demonstrated in chapter 5 have confirmed that there are marked differences between men's and women's communication behaviours and speech styles even in meetings in new and changing worksites. With regard to the first research question i.e *how do men and women manage conversation in meetings*?, there were noted differences in the way men and women manage conversation in management meetings. Men were observed making more attempts to change a group's decision as well as its evaluation criteria. They were also noted negatively evaluating the contributions of others. Women, on the other hand, were more supportive of others and tended to facilitate group closure through the way they gave positive evaluations of solutions towards the final stages of discussion. Women were also observed managing conversation by being cooperative and supportive of other women discussants as they jointly developed topics, maintained the interpersonal harmony of the group, continued the themes of previous contributors, and extended previous remarks with new information, other perspectives and related examples. Women also showed a high degree of sensitivity to others' points of view, as well as the ability to relate their verbal behaviour to the requirements of the situation, a central feature of group dynamics. Women also tended to be conciliatory in their speech, expressive and non-judgemental and were therefore accommodating in the way they tentatively offered suggestions, thus leaving room for further debate. They chose to work in a cooperative atmosphere. Men on the other hand preferred to use scoring and instrumental strategies, offering solutions before discussion and speaking more assertively and independently of others. It was also noted that men specifically initiated, evaluated, controlled and generally exhibited dominance language strategies.

Another observation was that men produced more statements to establish operating procedures and evaluate solutions. This indicates a more concerted attempt on the part of men to control and manage meetings. Women on the other hand produced more statements to generate alternative solutions. Such behaviour indicates a high degree of creativity in producing alternatives to solving the problems the group was confronting. Women also

tended to produce more positive evaluations towards the end of discussions, an observation consistent with the stereotype that women tend to be more supportive of others than men. It was also observed that women tended to speak in the later stages of meetings when those who believe they have a right to be heard first have had their turn. Their apparently delayed involvement and engagement in meetings could also be as a result of what Coates (1986) says reflects the deep- rooted contemplative nature of most women. Van Dijk's (1993) comment that some voices are thus censored, some opinions not heard and some perspectives ignored, seems pertinent to the discussion.

With regard to the second research question, i.e. *how do men and women present themselves in management meetings*?, it was noted that there was indeed a difference in the way men and women presented themselves and aligned and structured their contributions in business meetings. Women generally tended to use influence options that were weaker and less effective than the influence options preferred by men. Women were noted to use personal and dependent language strategies to influence others, while men tended to employ more direct and concrete influence strategies. In addition, it was observed that men, more so than women, were likely to display a cluster of power-related demonstrative behaviours such as verbal aggressiveness and features of assertion such as *of course,* while women were observed to use more frequently, features of doubt such as *I think.* Women also compromised on collecting social power by presenting themselves as being very supportive, in themselves strategies that can be interpreted as displaying lower levels of self-confidence. It was also observed that women in lower power positions, more so than men, typically acquiesced in dependent situations with high-power individuals like the chair, preferring to use strategies of deference as they, for example, allowed the chair to take over their presentations.

While the findings of the research have confirmed the notion that there is a difference between the way women and men structure and align their contributions in a business context, the challenge was in trying to understand why these differences appear, by observing the ways in which men and women present and negotiate their professional, social and gender identities and by inspecting more carefully the conditions under which they occur, in this instance, in the Zimbabwean corporate world. Of significance is the point that the findings have, to a large extent, confirmed that men and women do use different language features in interaction and align their ideas differently, reflecting the fact that the two groups come from different subcultures. To some extent, the research shows that simply totalling the variable

usage of linguistic forms by women and men presents a very partial picture. To understand why these differences occur, one needs to look at the roles played by women and men in the broader community of people whom they habitually interact with and what might motivate them to adopt particular forms of speech at particular times and in particular contexts – a task that lies beyond the scope of the present study. What appears to be of considerable significance in the study is the notion that the way women and men speak ultimately affects their position in economic and political spheres and even their personalities and perceived identities, which should lead naturally to an examination of the links between language and the structure of society. Over and above that, this kind of research in this particular area contributes to an understanding of how society works, maintains its stability and permits change. Research studies in the field of sociolinguistics, by their nature, hold out the promise not only of advancing linguistic and social theory, but also of providing a social critique and a programme of political action aimed at reducing gender inequality in different areas of operation, such as in this instance, the workplace.

The findings further support the assumption that interaction is generally framed by the context, position, culture, status and role of the addressor and addressee, among other factors. The manipulation of language in the meetings that formed the data of the research is a reflection of how people in a given society manipulate the world they live in through the language they use, and how they take this use naturally. The discourse of the interlocutors, including lexical, syntactic and conversational forms, clearly indexes various sociocultural conventions. While this analysis supports the growing body of research (Fishman, 1978b; Stokoe and Smithson 2001; Tannen, 1990) suggesting that there are gender-related differences in interaction, gender is definitely not the only identity factor activated in interaction. There are more complex factors, which act as context parameters that have a bearing on interaction, such as setting, ethnicity and cultural background, institutional role, age and power relations, which interact with gender difference.

There were a number of findings based on the recorded data that were unique to the study. The first one is that intergenerational talk emerged as a significant factor in the way men and women used language and addressed each other in meetings. As a further example of the significance of age, it was noted that the age of the interactants was a significant variable in the way that women in particular enacted their power. The younger they were, the less able they were to practice their speaking rights and assert their authority; and the older they were,

the more they appeared to have assimilated the language used by men in meetings. Socio-cultural factors also appear to have affected individual variation in speech. Women appeared more constrained to speak and adopt the linguistic behaviours displayed by men in meetings even in instances where they held higher position power than men. Other findings that came from the FGDs in particular are that women are challenged by the incongruence of their roles as female managers, relative to the prevailing social values and expectations towards them. Women themselves continue to conform to cultural expectations and related management styles that may be instrumental in their remaining marginalised and in 'subordinate' roles at the workplace. This study has also added weight to the emerging shift in emphasis from concern with how men and women speak differently, to the difference gender makes (Cameron 1992) in the way participants in new and emerging contexts present themselves.

In addition, what has emerged from this study is the controversial status of language. Social scientists have often regarded language as a neutral medium. This view in my opinion is oversimplified. Language is not a neutral medium but itself a social construct, partly constitutive of social reality and therefore a window on social reality. Language can construct and maintain social hierarchies. Linguistic behaviour can therefore influence and reflect social processes where culture shapes language choice and language use, with the consequence that language use itself shapes culture. Language therefore is not independent of society. The linguistic and the social are not two clearly separate dimensions. As Bell (1984) argues, language does indeed constitute social reality as well as reflect it. Within the field of linguistics, language has always been regarded as an important form of human symbolic behaviour. One way of viewing sociolinguistics therefore is to view language in interaction as the study of speakers' socially motivated linguistic choices in different contexts and situations.

The main discussion point around the findings that emerges from this research therefore is not that women use different linguistic features from men (though this is certainly to some extent true), but that different linguistic features are used in different ways by women and men. In a hierarchically structured society like that of Zimbabwe, the concepts discussed in this research are culturally valued and relevant as they are closely linked to how men and women are constructed by the society and culture in which they live. It is also possible that the conclusions that have been drawn about men and women in this research have been interpreted through layer upon layer of values, biases and assumptions that permeate the

culture within which the research was conducted, and also my own as the researcher. I refer here to the culture's general devaluing of women, including their style of communication. It could also be argued that the nature of this research in itself sets up a framework to diminish women's communication by perceiving gender-based differences as oppositional, with all the attendant biases about their value and effectiveness. I am keenly aware that because women are now operating in a predominantly and historically 'male space' in the Zimbabwean business context, the danger is that women are then evaluated by male standards, deviations becoming an interesting curiosity and 'a badge of femaleness' (Cameron, 1985) rather than a legitimate indication of different and equally valuable modes of conduct observed.

In the search for deeper understanding of the communicative strategies that women and men use in specific contexts, my analysis has raised certain questions: how, for example, cultural identity and institutional power interact with gender; to what extent gendered behaviour is shaped and constrained by the context; how expected behaviour can be used as a resource for manipulation and acquiescence by the 'other', resulting in stereotypical behaviour; and how this often leads to the maintenance of patterns of social dominance and inequality.

6.2   Contribution of the research

One of the aims of research is to make a contribution to existing knowledge and information about theory, methodology, data collection and application amongst other important components of scientific investigation. The contribution of my study is evaluated here in terms of the aims that it set out to achieve. These aims were formulated in section 1.3 and this assessment is structured around the theoretical-methodological, description and application levels. I discuss each in turn under separate subheadings.

6.2.1 Theoretical-methodological level

The research and its outcomes should influence the development of theory-driven research by demonstrating how a linguistic description of data using CA and pragmatics can, if examined through CDA, generate a more explanatory and layered account of 'what is going on' during talk-in-interaction in a given context. In addition, the use of a comprehensive qualitative
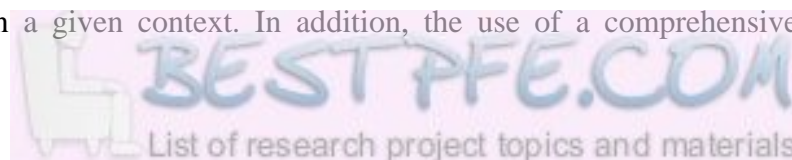
research design, which includes the use of FGDs for member checking, should demonstrate the value in adopting an inclusive and blended methodology for this exploratory research.

Gender studies have so far tended to focus on an essentialist treatment of gender, and have been inclined to categorise women and men into homogenous groups, resulting in the development of generalised theories around some noted differences including their communication style. This research, owing to the broad theoretical framework and approaches used, has looked at the 'thick' descriptions provided in the representative excerpts and sought to explore the meaning and explanations of interactants' communication styles and linguistic behaviour in the immediate and broader context. The research has also sought to explore meaning and explanations in the interactions that are dynamic and socially constituted phenomena, by examining talk at the turn exchange level (CA) and probing aspects of meaning and language use (pragmatics) as largely dependent on other features of the context of speech (CDA). The research may therefore contribute to the acceptance by theorists, other researchers and society at large that men and women have distinctive speech styles which should be treated as equally valid as they manifest themselves in different contexts.

This research, owing to its methodology and the sites from which the data was gathered, makes several contributions to studies in gender-related talk-in-interaction and workplace discourse. Firstly, the kind of interaction that provided the data for this research was natural and ongoing communication. It did not arise from contrived dyadic communication between subjects picked specifically for exploration and experimentation. Secondly, as discussed in 4.2.3, the data upon which the analysis was based was representative of the different interactional dynamics of management meetings. On this basis, the study therefore offers the advantage of drawing conclusions, however cautious, about how men and women in boardrooms use language and interactional strategies in relatively unstructured discussions. Care was also taken to analyse participants in different interactional situations in order to provide a 'thick' description of the research sites as well as to avoid difficulties of bias. To that end, there was a deliberate comparative focus on portions of (a) all-female discourse; (b) men and women in symmetrical dialogue; and (c) all-male discourse. This type of sampling offers data that is wide-ranging and which can contribute to further understanding of group behaviour, revealing how language may be used in professional settings to structure power relations, position ideas and influence the course of debate. The segments that were analysed were selected through careful delimitation of the population sampled, to reveal a more

comprehensive picture of the discourse style of the participants early, midway and late into the discussions.

6.2.2 Descriptive level

As projected in 1.2, the outcomes of this study could be used at a descriptive level in the field of interactional sociolinguistics. The findings of this study describe a very particular situation and differ from other research conducted elsewhere around language and gender. Most studies of this sort to date have been on white middle-class males and females and have not usually focussed on as specific an area as the corporate boardroom in a Southern African milieu, with all the associated dynamics. My research was based on a case study of four Zimbabwean companies in an under-researched domain: management meetings in a corporate setting at a time of major socio-economic transformation.

The participating companies fall under the service industry. The motivation for working with the four companies was that their composition was by and large representative and reflective of the situation obtaining in most companies in Zimbabwe. The companies were selected for their clearly recognisable organisational and structural form. The divisional heads constitute a board in which top level management sit and debate core issues affecting their companies. Three of the companies are situated in the city of Harare, and one in Bulawayo. Altogether 76 men and women of different ages and coming from different professional backgrounds were recorded. The outcomes should therefore provide significant insights into the ecology of the Zimbabwean workplace in general, and in particular, the male–female interactional dynamics of the boardroom.

6.2.3 Applied level

At an applied level, the findings can again be used to inform the theoretical base, content and form of studies in the field of applied linguistics. For academics, the research should in addition provide deeper insights into the processes of enhancing human relations through function-oriented discourse and interactional communication in a real life organisational setting. In particular, the field of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), with its emphasis on the calculated design and use of language, can be informed by the literature, the discussion

and some of the findings coming out of the description and comments around interactions in the boardroom, as discussed in Chapter 5. This field of applied linguistics has grown out of a heightened awareness of the importance of language as a tool of discourse in areas of specialisation both vocational and academic and is now offered in language faculties in many universities. Most texts dealing with English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and LSP (e.g. Hutchinson and Waters, 1993; Coffey, 1984; Ferguson and O'Reilly, 1979) do not, however, highlight issues of language and gender. My findings could therefore be used to inform the development of both form and content of such programmes. In addition, the outcomes of the research should be of value to business faculties from a training perspective, as the findings should clearly demonstrate how language is inextricably bound up with influence, power and success on the 'ideas market'. MBA studies in particular could be enriched further by the inclusion of aspects of language and gender on their programmes, and so would the prescribed texts for similar programmes such as the women in leadership and women in management programmes that have become standard bridging courses for women entering middle and senior management positions in many corporate companies today. Empowering women requires programmes that support this goal. This study therefore has implications for gender policy development, diversity training and management training for women. At a slightly lower level, high school curricula could be enriched by the introduction of critical literacy classes aimed at raising critical language awareness among young people. Similar educational applications have taken root in the UK, Australia and more recently in Zimbabwe.

The research itself may also influence analysts to re-evaluate what are thought to be distinctly female speech styles, to an explanation of women's language, not as merely the result of the subculture theories mentioned above in 4.3.4, but as a legitimate and positive manifestation of female culture and values. Furthermore, the findings of the research could be adopted and used to inform communication studies in general and in particular, cross-gender communication within dynamic worksites.

More importantly, the insights that can be gained from the findings of the research can be used to inform language and communication programmes which have rarely featured in on-the-job-training and human development initiatives. For women operating in corporate spaces in particular, the excerpts, discussions and findings drawn from how women participants in the boardrooms 'say what they say' should provide form and content upon which they can reflect on their own verbal behaviour. Such guidelines would serve to make women more

conscious of the notion of language as constituting action and prompt them to use the more influential language varieties which would enhance their visibility in the institutions in which they work. Given the scarcity of research on this topic in developing economies, this study could contribute to understanding the dynamics of female leadership in Africa and raise awareness among women and men alike regarding the unique experiences and challenges that they face in the workplace. Lastly, thirteen years after the Beijing conference of 1994 (at which women's rights in all sectors of life were declared, and to which Zimbabwe was a signatory), and the subsequent emergence of numerous other well-intended affirmative action programmes, the results of this research should help stimulate further debate on the success or otherwise of such programmes in new and changing worksites in Southern Africa and beyond.

6.3   Limitations of the study

It is imperative to point out here that despite the data that my research has accumulated about 'what men say and how women say', it would be presumptuous of me to claim definitive conclusions for the study. Hence the results of this research can only be viewed as indications of tendencies in the ways men and women use language in interaction.

Gender difference research is problematic in a number of ways. First, a comparative count of certain language features or interactional strategies as used by men and women does not in itself generate a comprehensive understanding of what they say or how they say things during interaction. And secondly, the differences in the way they say things can only be interpreted on the basis of assumptions that are frequently coloured by stereotypical notions of men's and women's language. Thirdly, the intended function of the selected language feature or interactional strategy can only be assumed by the researcher, as both language choice and the thought that influences it are strictly internalised, private and an integral part of the speaker's self-concept. Moreover, strong conclusions can only be drawn when cognisance is taken of the interdependence of actual speech with situational context and broader social concerns. Finally, coding and categorisation of talk-in-interaction will, up to a point, yield rich data open to various interpretations when the researcher, as well as the reader, acknowledges the multifunctionality of a linguistic utterance made as part of an interactional strategy, bounded by a full appreciation of the context in which it is made. In relation to data analysis, Widdowson (1998:137) argues for a more systematic application of a theoretical model. In

my opinion, this limits and narrows the options open to the researcher. I chose to use instead, a combination of approaches, 'in effect [what he refers to as] a kind of *ad hoc* bricolage which takes from theory whatever concept comes usefully to hand… [and encourages]…its expedient use as a tool-kit' to come away with clearer interpretation and explanations.

6.4   Suggestions for future research

My research may serve as a pointer to further studies that will continue to refine knowledge of the interrelationship between gender and communication. Perhaps the most useful line of enquiry for future research would be to examine a feature of male domination of conversation which has only been mentioned by this present study: namely that the overriding influence of gender is a product of not only the conversational behaviour of males themselves, but also of the supporting role played by females. Future research could promote further how men might fare in talk-in-interaction where support from women has been withheld. This could be done by identifying the dominating tactics and linguistic features used by men and the corresponding support features given by women, as discussed above. An experimental approach could be used in which women would be instructed to withhold their use of supporting conversational features to test the notion mentioned above. This would be achieved through formulation of a more delicate framework for analysis allowing word-by-word analysis of data derived from a stringently controlled sample in specific relational contexts. The framework would be supported by immediate comment and discussion from the subjects of research. This may lead to an understanding of 'why women tolerate social relations that subordinate their interests to those of men' (Ige and De Kadt 2002:148), and in turn, help unravel the complexities of conversational organisation and management that can result in the dominance of the one by the other. This might lead to a greater understanding of the dynamics around talk-in-interaction in mixed gender groups where power and status are important variables.

Future research could investigate further how the important variable of race might affect the way interactants in a boardroom relate to one another. The boardrooms in the new South Africa, for example, would provide rich data where white, Indian, coloured and African participants interact. Comparisons in the way participants use selected interactional mechanisms and 'do power' could be drawn between the different races in general, while

disregarding the gender dimension; between the different races while taking into consideration the gender dimension; or with reference to the experience and length of service of the different participants or with a direct focus on equity candidates. Comparisons could also be drawn based on the type of meeting or the race or gender of the person chairing the meeting. The analytical approaches used here could be adapted to suit the particular research site. CDA could be used to underpin the studies and CA and pragmatics as tools for the detailed analysis of utterances. FGDs and a wide spectrum of ethnomethodological approaches could be used more extensively in interpreting the naturalistic data gathered by means of a tape recorder In this way, communication scholars may get to generate new social and political theories around talk and to understand more fully the transformative implications of a diversity perspective and, in so doing, contribute to a better understanding of the workplace as it is today. This is of paramount importance if men and women are to work together more effectively.

Other possibilities for research could involve an examination of how members of the dominant group(s) in the workplace can discursively construct their own positions of dominance with a view to understanding the extent to which discourse can create, reproduce, or challenge embedded social structures. Similarly, the discursive processes that constitute racism or sexism could be analysed through the use of a multi-dimensional theoretical framework such as the one used in this study, to examine how those in power, for example managers, reproduce through subtle linguistic moves, racist or sexist views that discursively construct the subordination of those under their charge. Attention could also be focused on the team meetings held between managers and the workers that report to them to determine how they function and the role they play in the politics of the workplace (Fairclough, 1992). Research could also focus on the dynamics of the talk that makes up meetings and to examine how topics are selected and by whom, how issues are debated, whether control of the meetings is shared and negotiated and how resolutions are arrived at and proposals formulated. The research framework developed for this thesis, involving CA, pragmatics and CDA and anchored by the various forms of ethnography could provide a basis or a model for analysis.

Future research should also continue to examine the behaviour of men and women in other real-life settings such as at community meetings, or university board meetings where the decisions to be made are of equal importance, to determine if the outcomes noted in this study

are replicated. Within such research might be added the key variable of culture, as meetings do not happen in a vacuum, but give a reflection of the cultural values and expectations of the immediate society. It might be important therefore to capture, in this instance, the views of the society at the workplace about language use in public fora, as perceptions and norms can influence the performance of individuals. Furthermore, it is possible that because the nature of the industries that served as data sites have demanded a different communication style that was more customer oriented, the situation might be different in non-service industries such as manufacturing and mining, for example. This might call for studies to explore interactional tactics and styles adopted by managers, both male and female, in different types of organisations and to assess the influence of type of industry on the interactional styles and processes adopted. Lastly, the current research is certainly pointing to further examination of the correlation between language use and power in areas of influence.

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APPENDIX A:

TRANSCRIPT OF A STRATEGIC MEETING

This is a transcript of a meeting that ran for 2hrs 15mins as part of a 3-day-long management meeting. This was, in my view, one of the more discursive and representative boardroom meetings recorded as data. This was a relatively free flowing meeting. Some of the data for analysis was drawn from this meeting.

The MD of the group, James, and Agnes, the consultant, co-chaired the meeting.

1. **James:** Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome you all to this
2. meeting that promises to be rather long but I will try and control the meeting
3. so that we are not here all day (*laughter*). I want to welcome again Miss
4. Agnes Chikukwa who as you are all aware is here to try and help us
5. reconstruct our image both here and abroad. Mrs Chipunza is still here
6. amongst us and we all know what she is here for and so please feel free in
7. their presence. I will repeat myself ladies and gentlemen. You know we have
8. a problem on our hands. I will be honest and this is why we are out here, away
9. from all the interactions and destructions to try and sort it out. With the
10. current situation around us. I don't have to go into it in detail. The company
11. is facing er er shall I say a bit of a problem. We talked about this yesterday
12. and I hope that today we shall be looking at this in more detail and I am
13. looking to all of you contributing extensively.
14. **Agnes**: Perhaps we need to mark some boundaries for the day and give the problem a
15. start and well we can't really at this point give it an end date
16. **Chisha (M):**   I would say perhaps let us begin in March this year. That's when things,
17. problems really began to surface (uhm)
18. **Agnes:** Ok just before March, your mess is supposed to have been sorted out-lets talk
19. from March till now. What differences?
20. **James:**   It WAS defined. We realised we then embarked on processes to correct it.
21. Those processes are ongoing. Wh wh while they are ongoing its its they are
22. not going to happen overnight.(uhm), ISO on its own takes six months to a
23. year to to implement this.
24. **Nick:**   Would you like me to go into the details of the process?
25. **Agnes:**   No no its fine
26. **James:**   [We are not talking about the mess we had in March
27. **Agnes:**   Ok before March - from March your mess is supposed to have been sorted

28.　　　　　　　out. (uhm) Let's talk from March to now. What differences?
29. **James:**　　　It was. It was sorted out. It was defined. We realized (0.3) We then embarked
30. on processes to correct it. Those processes are ongoing. Wh wh while
31. they are on going its er they are not going to happen overnight. (uhm) ISO on
32. its own takes six months to a year to implement this eh eh before you get
33. Certification and then certification is not is not actual implementation as well.
34. There IS implementation or is there. You now have systems that people have
35. to make the difference but the market does not wait the one year that you need
36.　to be ISO and ISO is not everything in itself. To me it's a process it's a
37. management tool it's a way of doing things I want to see the result on the
38. certificate, I want to see people doing things better …better yah but the
39. market wants to see good vehicles for example you are talking about Hertz
40. that if they have the right car today they move. Its one thing to suggest. We
41. need to find the the money ourselves. We failed to find the money. There are
42. reasons that happened or that caused that. If the business is not given a jump
43. start they may, we may not find we may not live long enough to then
44. implement all … we … to resource ourselves (uhm) and generate the money
45. from within ourselves to create a future for us.
46. **Stella:** I think that's why we are here. If the business needs to be given a jump-start, I
47. think it needs to be justified and that's why we are here. We have to Convince
48. everybody beyond a doubt that it is what's needed.
49. **James:**　　　　　　　　　Is there ANYONE (*spoken with emphasis* as *he looks*
50. *around to check*) who is not convinced by ….
51. **Agnes:**　　　　　　　　　　　　[Sorry can we move on. You wanted to
52. say something.
53. **Heather:**　I was going to propose that maybe when we look at this (( )) why don't we
54. look at the factors that are inhibiting our ability to compete globally as as of
55. now and then possibly then we can look at the solutions
56. **Fran:**　　　And can we also consider which offices we are looking at in this global
57. market that we know that there is Safari Company in South Africa, we know
58. there is Safari Company in Zambia those two and eh'~~~ (*voice*
59. *amplitude decreases*)
60. **Thoko:**　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[How much business is
61. Safari Company bringing in? Most of the operations are in Zimbabwe? (uhm)
62. **Portia:**　　Is it significant?
63. **Chisha:**　　I'd say US$..... (*Amount and comment deleted on company request*)
64. **Agnes:** Ok what is it that is preventing us from getting to (0.2) our peak (0.3) in our
65. Zimbabwean offices?
66. **Tobias:**　　Is it our Zimbabwean offices or it is globally like this…?
67. **Agnes:**　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[No but you still have to
68. compete. You see, as a South African and a Zimbabwean office, what what
69. what is the difference?
70. **Nick:**　　No it's the same. That's why I am saying it's not the Zimbabwean office; it's
71. the global scene…
72. **Fran:**　　　　　　　　[Yes because when an international guest comes they are not
73. going to excuse the quality of your offices or the quality of your service
74. because you are in Zimbabwe
75. **Ben:**　　　　　No they are not!
76. **Fiona:** Yes, there, just as they walk in and book (0.2) the thing has failed, the system
77. has failed because it and I think to get it right we need to realise the thing

78. has failed and failed in a big way (uhm) in the market or in the place where it
79. matters the most (uhm) in Zim so (( )) the hotels see us and they still know the
80. company is there, is owned by whoever (uhm) but who are they? They only
81. give us rates. We need the customers to have confidence and (uhm) the
82. customers know Safari Company as a big brand (uhm) that brand is not there
83. anymore. They will expect the same standards in her office (she *looks in the*
84. *direction of a colleague heading the Mutare office*) as they do in your office
85. so no matter where your office is located, your standards should be the same.
86. **Tobias:**   The standards are the same. You you asked what is working against us?
87. **Agnes:**   [yah
88. **Fiona:**   [Or
89. militating against us (uhm) Safari Company competing in this (( )). Yesterday
90. I mentioned the failure of the brand. You cant go into the global world and
91. global market and say Safari Company has failed and expect everyone to be
92. excited like they used to be ten years ago because of what has happened so
93. there is need for us in Zim or the whole of Safari Company to er er I mean it
94. affects us at home, there is need for us to come up with strategies that address
95. that problem that has been created by the office in Kenya (( ))
96. **Sam:** Re-branding (( )) maybe
97. it's a publicity drive to sort of separate ourselves from the plain brand and
98. bring ourselves as a new brand to…
99. **Roderick:** [Can we really say that the brand is bad? Is
100. that an accurate assessment eh eh? (( )) (*Everyone is talking at once*)
101. **Ruth:** [I commented earlier that that is only a perception (*there are pockets of talk in*
102. *the room*)
103. **James:**   Can we please have one meeting!
104. **Mandla:** So we we I think we need to correct. Charity begins at home somebody said
105. yesterday we need to get it right where we are
106. **Susan**: Before you carry on and then make the next step when we already have
107. credibility but if you don't have credibility at home and you go across and you
108. say here we are there is the same problem that we see there.
109. **Fran** (f): Also another great route another route that we might take instead of opening
110. an office in Kenya is to identify a company where we will we can use as eh on
111. a strategic alliance local basis so that if people are booking they do a one call
112. like for Africa (how do they do…) and ignore when they are going to use us
113. I…
114. **Dorothy**: But how about the major players, the major tourism players who bring the
115. tourists into Zimbabwe, the ones who do the trades move or host the trade
116. shows. What is THEIR opinion?
117. **George:** I think what we should be looking at is the perception that the customer in the
118. first {place, in the source markets} has about Safari Co
119. **Ruth:**{Yes that's what I'm saying…}
120. **James:** So the customer is born in France for example born in Italy or in UK they look
121. at Safari Company as a group. It used to be one group. They would make one
122. phone call in the London office and they would book Africa **(uhm)** it would
123. be your people into Kenya and Southern Africa and the whole thing is
124. distributed.**(uhm)** Now they make a phone call and there is no one around to
125. answer the phone call **(uhm)** and then the clients that have been booked in
126. Kenya and the whole thing has failed there and they might have something in
127. South Africa and they might have something in Zim but what they know is

128. the the marketing office em the MD the group MD's office does not exist.
129. The office that was in Philadelphia is no more. The office that was in France
130. is no more. I I can't see anyone not saying this thing has failed because it has
131. and I think to get it right we need to realize the thing has failed and failed in a
132. big way (**uhm**) in the market or in the place where it matters the most (**uhm**)
133. in in Zim so (( )) the hotels see us there, they still know the company is there,
134. is owned by whoever (**uhm**) but who are they.? They only give us rates. We
135. need the customers to have confidence and (**uhm**) the customers know Safari
136. Company as a big brand (**uhm**) that brand is not there anymore and had all
137. this infrastructure that they they they that gave them comfort you you want to
138. book Africa as a domestic call away. You want to pay Africa as a (()) it's a
139. cheque that you sign without going for Reserve Bank approval because it was
140. all in the same market. (**uhm**) Those things don't happen anymore (**uhm**)
141. **Agnes:**   Sorry you wanted to say something
142. **Felicity:** I was just going to add on to what James has just said that uh perceptions on
143. the international market are reality. Just as much as you want to run away
144. from it its there, its life (**uhm**). More often than not now with the great deal of
145. what has happened in Kenya, you find clients writing to us and saying so who
146. to use in Kenya we have used Safari Company before and now what do we
147. do? Now you have to go to all these lengths of explaining what has happened
148. to Kenya and refer them back maybe to Safari Company France for them to go
149. back to somebody in Kenya and ask them to provide the services (**uhm**) so in
150. that process somebody else would have woken up and dealt with the client
151. (**uhm**) and we are over and done with. By the time we go through all those
152. processes yourselves and try to compete with the client, the client is taken
153. (**uhm**) and more so there could be some other agents in Kenya (**uhm**) who
154. have got relationships with other agents here in Zimbabwe (**uhm**) and they go
155. to speak to the agents and talk and discuss and finalise their rates (**uhm**) and
156. in the meantime you are left behind (**uhm**) and this client will also tell other
157. clients what's happening within our company (**uhm**) and we lose business in
158. that way (**uhm**).
159. **Tobias:** Sorry shouldn't we see this as an opportunity for us to actually then get into
160. Kenya and have a brand that we can control or have quality standards that we
161. can control (uhm) and…
162. **Boyman:**   [Because we can get depressed about the brand having eh
163. disappeared and so forth but to me it represents an opportunity. It means that,
164. it gives us an opportunity to do things that we would probably not do.
165. **Agnes:**   So what are we going to do about the failure of the brand?
166. **Chisha:** I think we are misunderstanding each other here. When I mentioned that the
167. brand has failed, I wanted us to realize where we are coming from. I am not
168. saying we have failed and we are on our knees and out. I think we need to
169. define the problems first then we (yah) go back and say our problems are one
170. two three four and this is what we do to correct them.
171. **Agnes:** So can we have solutions now?
172. **Charles:** If we define problems as opportunities immediately, without implementing the
173. opportunity then we don't get anywhere. In fact, that's why we are wha where
174. we are because we haven't taken time to correct (( ))
175. **Chisha:** I think lets be clear we we what I am saying here is we can easily get eh we
176. could easily say here that no if the brand has failed then why should we
177. operate as Safari but what I am saying is if we had offices all over the world

178. and if we are getting people who are talking to us because they think we are
179. related to Safari Kenya, that to me represents an opportunity. We can do
180. something to capture that particular client (ughm)
181. **Charles:** You can't capture them during the time they are talking to us because they are
182. angry and frustrated. There was, there is one or two who don't know but the
183. majority is wounded by that process. I mean hey guys, in tourism people book
184. six months to a year in advance, they pay a deposit and they plan ahead
185. **Joseph:** Let us open an office in Kenya. Is there a-n-y-thing that stops us from
186. opening…?
187. **George:** There is nothing that would stop us but you must realise that by going into
188. Kenya, it doesn't overnight give you clients because you still have the name
189. associated with instability. For me, the solution (*he stops speaking and looks*
190. *around the room*) I I wasn't prescribing the solution. I wanted us to vote. For
191. me the solution is we will need to go into the market and spend money to
192. sensitise them and tell them we are now separate, we are now differently
193. owned, we have the sureties that they would need, the insurance, the backing
194. up, all those things that matter which are not associated with Kenya anymore
195. *** those are the things that matter but for us to put an advert in UK can we
196. really do that? Maybe we can. How much do we need to spend in the first
197. world to tell the first world that Safari Company is alive, is well, is well
198. funded, has no links with Kenya and is not going down and there is all these
199. things. Those things need to count too and they need to be expressed and told
200. to the world. It doesn't come cheap but it needs to be done. I don't think
201. opening offices in Kenya will solve that but if we told them we were separate
202. because the business we wanted, we want is in Zim. If we want business in
203. Kenya its um it's another step. (uhm) I think then we go but I speak from a
204. realisation which might be wrong that we don't have as much resources to do
205. all that. To invest in Kenya is another thing actually. To correct our situation
206. in Zim alone is another. I mean aliens come to do inspection trips every now
207. and then. They see our vehicles and we say we are investing in Kenya. When
208. they say do you have resources, we don't even have air conditioned buses. We
209. go to Zambia. We try to ship them there and we say use Safari Company for
210. your holiday travel. We can't do that when we know what we have there is not
211. right? So I think we we need to correct it. Charity begins at home. Tobias said
212. yesterday we need to get it right where we are before we carry on and then
213. make the next step when we already have credibility but if you don't have
214. credibility at home and go across boarders and you say here we are there is a
215. problem with doing things that way.
216. **Margaret:** Also another great route that we might take instead of opening an office in
217. Kenya, is to identify a company where we will, we can use as eh- on a
218. strategic alliance local basis so that if people are booking, they do a one call
219. like Africa-how do they do… (*Looking around in search of the correct term*)
220. and ignore when they are going to use us. I ...
221. **Boyman:** [That's the point I'm really into.
222. I'm not saying practically lets go to Kenya and open our own. I'm just saying
223. (*he turns in the direction of Charles who spoke two turns before this*) if you
224. have got 2000 people phoning about Safari Co in business, we might end up
225. having a person dedicated to dealing with Safari Co Kenya. In a way you
226. don't make income from it. If you are able to see that you make money from
227. this like what he is saying umm, (*he again turns in the direction of Charles,*

228. *who spoke two turns before this,*) he is trying something to deal with
229. somebody. (*At this point there are many pockets of discussion and people all*
230. *talking at the same time*)
231. **Anne:**   I think the the solution is~~~
232. **Sam:**   [We don't have a problem with people wanting to go
233. to Kenya. (no) I don't think there is a huge market there anyway (uhm)
234. **Agnes:** Can we please slow down? Sorry gentlemen, gentlemen I think we are going
235. to miss a point. We need to raise awareness. We are talking about the failure
236. of a brand. The first thing we need to do is to disassociate ourselves with er er
237. from that brand to say that we are a separate entity, to say Safari Company
238. Zimbabwe is a totally different company right? So that's one of the first steps
239. we need to take before we start dealing with people who are phoning or
240. whatever it is. You need to let people know. How are you going to do that?
241. How is that going to be done in terms of people knowing that you are a
242. different entity, you are not part of Safari Kenya that had problems?
243. **Felicity**: I think part of that we have already done (*murmuring in the room*). We wrote
244. to all the clients (uhm) and advised them…..
245. **Sam:**   [That is not enough. We need to
246. be knocking on doors. We need the senior, the more senior people. We need
247. to go to our traditional markets at the moment, our big suppliers are still as
248. confused as anyone else and reassure them that er er…
249. **James:**   [I don't think
250. writing to clients is good enough, only for the simple reason that you mustn't
251. forget there is potential clients out there as well (uhm) if you write to people
252. who you already got relationships with, what about others who have been
253. hearing things and you don't have relationships with or are not now even
254. going to come as they were potential customers. So I think just to tie in with
255. what David said, maybe something that's more bald, more of a bold
256. statement. This will need to be done just like an urgent issue (uhm), putting
257. the adverts in the newspapers, maybe reassuring, er traveling there and just
258. reassuring them, having sort of conferences or marketing er shows or
259. something. Its something that's not as big as WTN or something that is a little
260. more personal because WTN is very impersonal because there is a lot of
261. people there (uhm) but something that will make people see that we made the
262. effort (uhm) and we are a different breed of people or a different business.
263. **Felicity:**   Just maybe to add on to what she has said What other operators are doing,
264. have been doing is is for instance like before WTN, maybe a week or two
265. before the actual show itself, they would go on a trip abroad to meet the big
266. clients in their offices and talk about their businesses.
267. **Mary:**   Last year when we went on a road show to Europe, we made appointments
268. with various stakeholders and we had meetings with them and tried to reassure
269. them about the situation in Zimbabwe. We took a lot of photographs and
270. posters and after these initial meetings we then attended the Tourism trade
271. shows with a better idea of the questions we were likely to be asked.
272. **Heather:** We realised that there was still a lot of interest in the services we offer and a
273. lot of the clients we met had recommended or used our services. We used this
274. approach last year and the year before that. Jenny might want to give more
275. details of what we did then
276. **Ben:**   I don't want to go into historical events. From the historical side, there are still
277. strengths. I am fine with that. This company has strengths. Those are what we

278. need to play more and more. This is who we are, this is where we are and
279. move on.
280. **Agnes:** Can I ask then, maybe our Marketing and PR is not as aggressive?
281. **Anna:** I was going to say do we have no identity (yah) that is coming out here (uhm).
282. We do not have the kind of presence that is required for anyone to actually say
283. (uhm) no Safari Company is kicking in the (( ))
284. **Joseph:** Well not exactly. What we have is eh eh …
285. **Agnes:** Do you have? No you don't have a dedicated marketing team no?
286. **Joseph:** I I I would not want to answer that now I think …
287. **Agnes:** Yes and no. It's a no. It's a process that we have done things that would talk
288. to the market. We have talked to the customers. That we know. But admitted
289. yes, we we are working on staffing for our marketing department that's, but…
290. **Fiona:** No we are going backwards. Please no, we are not being defensive.
291. **Joseph:** No we are not defensive we want to move forward and I am saying…
292. **Agnes:** I I I am actually I am trying to get us to move forward. How are we going to
293. raise awareness. I am just talking about a a a marketing team so I am saying
294. do you have a marketing team? If not what are you doing about it? Let's move
295. forward.
296. **Joseph:** We're actually in the process of recruiting the marketing personnel
297. **Agnes:** Because that's what you need but what I wanted to say is we have never at
298. one point… (*the consultant speaks on marketing and public relations for*
299. *close to 15 minutes*)
300. **Dorothy:** I think what's important is is I think we are getting defensive with this
301. previous management. Let's forget about that. What we are trying to do is to
302. do something differently (uhm) from today forward because you keep making
303. excuses and we will never improve because if you think you still haven't
304. achieved excellence so let's keep striving for whatever we want no matter
305. what we were last year. That is the most important thing. Where do we want
306. to be? How do we want to get there? So even if we were in the doldrums and a
307. company was broke and the track record was poor, yes those are the times we
308. need to deal with but for now, let's look at how we can move forward. What
309. can we do as management? This is management so the solutions are supposed
310. to be in this room here (0.2) of how we are going to move forward (*at this*
311. *point there were a number of people observed nodding in agreement*)
312. **Mandla:** There are certain strengths that we have as a company. Those are what we
313. need to play more and more, this is who we are, we need to think of a number
314. of strategies that we could use to create a new image of ourselves out there. A
315. brochure here and a road show(uhm) with a couple of people and market those
316. strengths and positives and let people see us for who we really are and…
317. **Charles:**   {and blow our trumpet
318. **Mandla:**   {And blow our trumpet
319. yes}. I mean this this award plus that that package. I think depending on how
320. you devise your marketing, your marketing thrust can reach out to so many
321. more people who can actually come on board
322. **Regis:** Our marketing record is not that bad, I mean there is room for improvement
323. and…
324. **Chisha:**   [Can we be more specific and speak in terms of figures and
325. benchmarks. In these meetings we need to be specific. What exactly are we
326. saying about our record in that regard?
327. **Nick:** In my view the company ought to be seeking ways of re-aligning itself to the

328. rest of the group. Up to now we have been talking of marketing as though we
329. are totally independent. We have certain constraints both from within and
330. without. At the last review meeting, Mr Mavu called the meeting to take a
331. closer look at our goals and how these merge into the brand values
332. **Margaret:**So with the marketing function, can we have it as group marketing function so
333. that we are driving the whole brand of the Safari Company Brand?
334. **Felicity:**One of the issues that came out of our management review for those who were
335. there was that we needed a corporate marketing plan(uhm) so that we can take
336. advantage of those synergies we spoke about. We can then with the corporate
337. plan, have other issues and I think it was an action plan leading to the setting
338. up of a marketing plan but it is then dependent on other issues that Regis is
339. raising. There is a time frame that will allow us to sort ourselves out before
340. the corporate marketing plan comes out
341. **Fiona:** And I think we also need to identify our market at the moment. After all that
342. has happened, we need to know who our target market is at the moment and
343. see how we can firm up on our plans
344. **Agnes:** Can we, lets move on then we can come back to this issue. We need to do a
345. quick assessment of customer feedback on products and services which one of
346. the ISO regulations anyway and examine the right of the customer and their
347. power to make their views known and their desire to have them known. As
348. management, what do you think?
349. **Margaret:**I think we touched on it some other time. Remember I was saying we are
350. required now under ISO to actually monitor (uhm) and measure customer
351. satisfaction, how we are doing. We have a questionnaire system which is
352. monitored but also when they do complain or compliment, we analyse that
353. data and we measure the temperature on the market, how we are doing, but we
354. still have a long way to go in terms of proactively capturing what they are
355. thinking (uhm) in other areas that are not Vic Falls
356. **Agnes:**   So the reaction, feedback system is in place ya?
357. **Roderick:** I think er when we talk about customers we also need to probably think about
358. who this person is, their profile and so on. To me, the first customer is your
359. workmate within your own environment. If my work depends on information
360. that he is supposed to give to me, why should we even start to talk about an
361. outsider if I can't get a report from somebody who has just left my office or an
362. e-mail for that matter? So whilst we evaluate what outside customers think of
363. us…
364. **Charles:**   [In terms of…
365. **Thoko:**   [In terms of customers
366. **Portia:**   I think just to add on these problem forces (( )) to do our own survey
367. internally to find out what the temperature inside our own organisation is
368. because this is a service company. There is a lot more interaction with the
369. world
370. **Heather:**   [We then~~~
371. **Mandla:**   [with the outside world and your charity at home is to start ah
372. from the good places
373. **Felicity:** In terms of say, you had a problem in Vic Falls em which needed to be solved
374. in Harare, how will that be communicated to Harare and what will the speed
375. of the reaction be?
376. **Susan:**   Um concerning complaints or…?
377. **Mary:**   [complaints, queries…

378. **George:**   [Look there are open
379. lines, there are communication lines which are fairly effective but maybe not
380. always used to the fullest. Sometimes announcements don't go out as fast as
381. they should so people don't get information when they should. It's a learning
382. process but I think we have structures and systems that would ensure that
383. anything can be dealt with. We are in a learning process. Within ISO we will
384. end up with forms where we will actually evaluate each other (uhm) and be
385. evaluated by the customer as well. The customer will comment on account
386. handling, comment on us and all those processes but as we speak today, no we
387. haven't got forms to pull out and say we have done it. We are working
388. towards that.
389. **Fran:** Would it not be fair maybe to do a survey now as we go through this transition
390. to understand because that will also help us with this planning process
391. **James:** I would say yes and no because there is so much happening. Maybe someone
392. who is sitting outside may not realise that the transition has brought so much
393. more so everyone is running about with so much work to achieve ISO. I work
394. with about ten managers that we go to observe that will now have to create
395. time to do all these things, prioritising and deciding what is more pertinent but
396. the message has been going out that everybody must be informed about our
397. objectives, but we have not yet sat down to say these are the processes of
398. working. We will have to and then we will know which departments are
399. failing and which ones are not meeting requirements and which ones are not
400. satisfying whoever and whatever and future discussions will be informed by
401. the process
402. **Felicity:** In terms of what and how we must do better, the purpose of people being here
403. in this meeting is that they need to buy into this plan. Things have happened in
404. this office and departments that are not submitting or doing things according
405. to set deadlines, those are the things that need to be ironed out because if I am
406. not sending a report on time for example, that means her work (*pointing to a*
407. *female colleague*) suffers and so I am causing a problem towards her right?
408. We need to audit our work environment and have some recommendations on
409. actions to be taken on non performers rather that sitting in our offices and
410. saying to somebody AJ wants to see you because you haven't done this and
411. you haven't done that
412. **Chisha:** Yah I think that if people are not using processes and their managers it must
413. be looked into. If somebody is trying to derive business from South Africa and
414. can't tell her pricing or rates and what is available and where those are, the
415. very dry issues that we need to talk about and resolve, then it's very easy for
416. us to say things are ok and not talk about detail. Let's talk about detail and
417. make sure that as we go on, we know where the problem is. There could be
418. genuine reasons why people are failing to provide rates to South Africa and
419. why the guy in Zambia does not do certain things and we need to understand
420. that from an organisational point of view otherwise we shall probably be
421. wasting time
422. **Margaret**   I was going to say that maybe the reason why we are not going after these
423. issues as he is saying is is because we will have dealt with them at the office
424. to the logical conclusion so maybe bringing it up here again would be going
425. back and readdressing issues we have already addressed (*everyone is talking*
426. *at this point*).
427. **James:** I believe we have been sitting and debating for a long time and at this point I

428. would like us to just note the points and action plans agreed on going forward.
429. **Sam:** I would like to suggest that each manager make a note of the issues relating to
430. their department first and then from those issues we can then decide on the
431. actions going forward at organisational level (*there is general agreement to*
432. *the suggestion*)
433. **James:** I get the sense that is the general feeling around the room. If that is so, can we
434. then perhaps start with those confirmations tomorrow morning? I will early
435. this evening circulate the issues that I would like us to touch on tomorrow so
436. people have an idea of whether they can afford to snooze off for a while
437. (*laughter*). I know its been a long meeting. Anything from your side Ma am,
438. perhaps some observations or concluding remarks?
439. **Agnes:** Thank you. Maybe just to reiterate what I said yesterday that we need to move
440. away from bashing ourselves and look at how we can work on our business
441. going forward. Some good debate all round I must say and perhaps tomorrow
442. I will take the driving seat a little more now that I have a fair idea of the
443. concerns and direction that you would like to take the business
444. **James:**   Thank you for those wise words. Meeting adjourned

Field notes

This was a very long and animated meeting. The average age of the attendees would be 35. The MD is young and keen to get places as quickly as possible and he leads a young and dynamic team.

 It was evident from the interactions that most of the managers have worked together for a while as there was a lot that was assumed as common knowledge to all but there were a few new managers who listened more than they spoke even on the second day of the meeting. As noted in other subsequent meetings, the women tended to speak in networks and towards the end of the meeting. Soon after this meeting, the men reconverged at the bar and around the MD and they continued talking until dinner time while most of the women went up to their rooms (*meeting held at Troubeck Hotel in the Eastern Highlands*).

APPENDIX B:

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTION USED

The transcription techniques and symbols used in this thesis were devised by Gail Jefferson in 1973 in the course of research undertaken with Harvey Sacks. They have been adapted and used as an adjunct to the tape recorded materials.

[	The starting point of some overlap
(( ))	Inaudible/indecipherable speech
…..	Portion of transcript omitted
***	longer uninterrupted pause
caps	Emphatic stress
~~	Indicates decreased amplitude
{ }	Indicates simultaneous talk by two or more people
Bold	Emphasis my own
[…]	Utterance not complete
uhm	Indicator of women's minimal response
ughm	Indicator of men's minimal response
r-e-a-l-l-y	Word dragged out

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FGDs

1.   In meetings, are you conscious of your gender or that of others?

2.   How do your colleagues address you in meetings? Are you comfortable with this?

3.   Do you believe that men and women behave differently in meetings? If so how and why is this so?

4.   Do you think that men and women speak differently in meetings and if so how?

5.   Do you feel that some members dominate discussion? If yes, how do they do it? Does it have anything to do with age, gender, expertise, personality?

6.   In the boardroom, do you speak differently from the way you speak in the office?

7.   What strategies do you use to attract the attention of others?

8.   How do you make it known to others that you wish to enter the floor? Do you announce your intention to speak, raise your voice or wait for an opportune moment?

9.   Have you picked up some of the language styles used by men or women?

10.   Do you sometimes admire the way men or women express themselves in meetings and if so why?

11.   Do you have a male or female role model?

12.   Do you allow others male or female to help you in getting a point across? If yes why do you and vice versa?

13.   Do you sometimes feel intimidated by your colleagues and if so, how do they do it?

14.   Do you wish you could be more forceful in the way you put your ideas across?

15.   Do you sometimes feel you would operate better in an environment with more women?

16.   Do you find it easy to be explicit in the way you say things?

17.   Do you think your experiences in the boardroom would be different if you were younger or older? Why?

18.   Have you come to the end of the meeting with an idea still unexpressed?

19.   Do you sometimes hesitate before you speak? If you answer yes, why?

20.   Do you rehearse internally what you are going to say before you vocalise it. If the answer is yes, say why?

21.   Do you worry about the opinion that your colleagues have of you?

22. Do you sometimes feel pressurised to play the expected role? If the answer is yes, what role is that?

23. Do you ask many questions during meetings?

24. Do you make a lot of suggestions during meetings?

25. When someone overlaps your speech, how do you interpret this?

26. How can you tell when a colleague has finished what he had to say?

27. Do you feel that you speak with authority? Give reasons for your answer?

28. Do you often find yourself telling a story to illustrate your point?

29. Why do you think some people like to rephrase the utterances of others?

30. How do you win friends in conversation?

31. Do you use technical jargon in meetings?

32. Do you lobby your point before a meeting? If yes, where, when and how do you do it?

33. Are you concerned about how you come across in meetings?

34. What image do you think you portray to your colleagues? Firm, assertive, accepting, unaccommodating, nice-any other?

35. To what extent is your workplace personality influenced by your background and culture?

APPENDIX D:

CONSENT FORM

Name of Participating Company…………………………………………………………….

Name and Designation of person granting permission…………………………………………

I, the undersigned, in my position as …………………………………………do hereby grant Linda LC Chipunza permission to enter our premises for the express purposes of conducting research towards the study of a Doctorate in Linguistics with the University of Zimbabwe. I wish to make it known that:

- I understand my role in facilitating her entry into the company's boardroom
- Her presence in our meetings has been explained to the board members
- Linda Chipunza can conduct interviews with participating individuals on a one-on-one basis or as a group
- Linda Chipunza has undertaken to protect the identity of our company and that of the individuals participating
- We, as a Company, agree to the-tape recording and transcription of the meetings and conversations that she will hold with various members of our staff
- The data that Linda Chipunza will collect from our premises will be used solely for academic purposes and that we reserve the right to withdraw any tapes that she may have recorded at our site should we feel it necessary to do so, up to a period of four years after recording
- We, as a company, reserve the right to renegotiate the terms of our participation during the period of research
- We, as a company reserve the right to withdraw our participation as subjects in her research at any time

Signed……………………………………………

Date……………………………………………