INVESTIGATING MALE AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP STYLES AND POLITENESS IN THE INDONESIAN WORKPLACE

by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Canberra
Faculty of Arts and Design
Discipline of Humanities

July 2016

ABSTRACT

Investigating male and female leadership styles and politeness in the Indonesian workplace

This research explored the perceptions and use of leadership styles and politeness strategies by Indonesian male and female managers in business meetings. Although significant research has been conducted on male and female leadership styles and politeness strategy use in the Western context, this research is lacking in the dynamically changing Indonesian context which is traditionally a hierarchical and highly paternalistic society. There has been a steady growth in the number of Indonesian women occupying leadership positions in the workforce which has created novel contexts of linguistic use. This research aims to raise awareness of the potential of women as managers and the challenges they face in a patriarchal society.

To address the gap on gender oriented leadership research, the present thesis employed the method of linguistic ethnography, to examine the leaders' linguistic use in the Indonesian context. Ten male and ten female managers' meetings were digitally recorded and semi-structured interviews with twenty managers and forty male and female subordinates of these managers were also conducted to derive the perceptions of the managers and their subordinates on the managers' leadership styles and politeness strategy use. A close thematic analysis of the interviews revealed the five most frequently used leadership strategies in the interviews with the participants which formed the basis of analysis. To identify the leadership styles in the business meetings a mixed discourse analysis framework was utilised (Holmes, 1995). To analyse politeness strategies in discourse, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies were combined with the discursive politeness approach (van der Bom & Mills, 2015).

While both male and female managers shared similar views about the characteristics of a good leader they held contrastive perceptions about characteristics of male and female leaders. These gender specific differences in leadership styles were not born out in the business meetings. Both managers displayed the same leadership strategies in the business meetings: being a good mentor, being decisive, being democratic, and being nurturing and caring. The only leadership style that was only adopted by male managers was following religious beliefs. Similar findings were reported in the analysis of politeness strategies: male and female managers employed politeness equally to achieve particular interactional goals.

This study demonstrates that gender stereotypes still exist in the Indonesian workplace since leadership for females is believed to contradict traditional religious beliefs and the patriarchal culture. Women are underestimated, disrespected and still restrained by gender stereotypes, patriarchal and religious beliefs. However, female managers performed equally well in leading meetings. Despite the dual role expected of Indonesian women, being a mother/ wife and a professional, they performed as well as male managers. This suggests gender roles are changing and forces of globalisation influence the Indonesian highly paternalistic society. The thesis concludes with recommendations for awareness raising and empowering women leaders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my primary supervisor, Dr Eleni Petraki, for her committed and energetic supervision, continuous support, expert advice, and meticulous reading of the drafts of the thesis throughout my PhD journey. Dr Eleni Petraki has also helped me to develop not only research skills but also interpersonal skills. I have learned numerous relevant skills during my research journey, not only writing and presentation skills but also the ability to work methodically and systematically. Moreover, Dr Eleni Petraki has encouraged me to contribute to the research community through presenting my work in two international conferences in Athens, Greece, and Adelaide. Most of all, I really appreciate her patience with me. Without her professional supervision, I would not have come this far.

I am also very grateful to Dr Deborah Hill for the fruitful critique on my writing which encouraged me to work harder and Dr Emmaline Lear for keeping me motivated and confident in my writing. My sincere thanks also go to Dr Conny Semiawan and Asdi from LIA Foundation who had helped me to get the partial scholarship to pursue a doctoral degree. I am also thankful to all the colleagues at LIA Foundation for their invaluable assistance during my data collection. Without their willingness to work with me, this project would have never been accomplished. My thanks also go to all my PhD student colleagues in the Faculty of Arts and Design for being great encouraging friends and helpful anytime I had problems with my writing. I am also grateful that Beth Barber was willing to help me with editing advice on my thesis writing.

Finally, I am deeply thankful to my loving husband, Yari Yuhariprasetia who not only inspired me to continue my study but also gave me enormous support and encouragement as well as put up with me in difficult times. Special thanks go to my two lovely daughters, Shafira Nada Fathia and Mutiara Nandhiaty, who have been my source of strength throughout my candidature. Last but not least, I am grateful for my Dad and Mum for their endless prayers so that I can finally make my dream comes true.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOD : Board of Directors

BLS : Bureau of Labor Statistics (US)

BPS : Badan Pusat Statistik (the Indonesian Central Agency of Statistics)

CDA : Critical Discourse Analysis

DA : Discourse Analysis

FTA : Face Threatening Act

FM : Female manager

FSMM : Female subordinate of the female manager

MM : Male manager

MSFM : Male subordinate of the female manager

PC : Personal Computer

UC : University of Canberra

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