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不同立場定位之跨性別女性語言風格：

言談及聲調分析

Transgender Woman Speech Style in Different Stance

Positioning: A Discourse and Acoustic Analysis

徐愷晟

Xu, Kai-Cheng

指導教授：蘇席瑤 博士

Advisor: Su, Hsi-Yao , Ph.D.

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摘要

本論文研究跨性別女性社群中的共通話題和言語風格，並分析作為跨性別者的立場和自我定位與音調範圍及平均音調之間的關係。研究中除了探討跨性別女性在社群中的共通話題、言語風格、跨性別潛規則和隱藏跨性別身份行為之間的潛在關係之外，在「誰能夠算是跨性別？」的這個問題上，也研究考察了跨性別女性的身分如何影響角色在不同對話中的說話風格。

本研究從台灣的網路論壇 Dcard（跨性別版）和 Discord 上的台灣跨性別交流區中招募了18名跨性別女性。實驗數據收集包含了點餐社交實驗及一對一面談的兩階段過程。點餐社交實驗提供聲學分析方面的研究數據，而一對一面談中探討到不同主題，提供言談分析方面的研究數據。聲學分析著重在音調變化，而言談分析則深入研究有關跨性別者對於跨性別議題的表達及溝通方式。受試者年齡在21到40歲之間，提供本論文有關跨性別者的聲音材料和社交互動的訪談資料。

本研究揭示了跨性別女性獨特的聲調及言談特色。在聲調分析中顯示跨性別族群音調範圍的寬廣特點。受試者被分為高（H）和低（L）音調組，並在其中分析並討論跨性別者在遇到相關問題時的表達方式和使用規避詞等情況。訪談中探討了各種跨性別概念，且表現了不同的跨性別定義和判斷標準的嚴格程度差異。儘管存在一些研究侷限性，本研究提供了有關跨性別聲音、聲音訓練、言語風格和跨性別轉變過程的寶貴見解，對臨床實踐和社會語言學有深遠影響。

關鍵詞：社會語言學、跨性別、話語、音調、立場、言語風格

ABSTRACT

This research aims to collect common topics and speech styles within trans woman communities, comparing participants' pitch values based on their stances and self-positions. It explores potential connections between common topics, speech styles, transgender norms, and the concealment of transgender identity. In addressing the question: "Who counts as trans?" This study places a specific focus on the stances of trans women, exploring whether these stances might have a relative influence on the speech styles of speakers in different conversational roles.

18 trans women were recruited from popular online forums in Taipei, Taiwan—Dcard (Trans Board) and the Taiwanese Transgender Community on Discord. They aged 21 to 40 and provided insights into transgender voices and social interactions. Data collection includes a social interaction experiment (ordering scenario) and one-on-one interviews covering various topics. Acoustic analysis mainly focused on pitch variations, while discourse analysis focused on the expressions of transgender toward transgender issues.

The finding explores the unique acoustic features of trans women, revealing distinct voices within the community. Acoustic analysis highlights trans voice pitch values, categorizing participants into high (H) and low (L) pitch groups with an obvious voice pitch gap between 159Hz and 172Hz. The result uncovers trans women's cautious expressions and the use of hedging in discussing trans-related issues. The definition discussion also explores transgender concepts, highlighting definitions and strictness levels in different aspects. Despite limitations, the research contributes valuable insights into transgender voices, voice training, speech styles, and the complexities of transitioning, with implications for clinical practices and sociolinguistics.

Keywords: sociolinguistic, transgender, discourse, pitch, stance, speech style

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This sociolinguistic research aims to investigate speech styles of Taiwanese transgender women, specifically focusing on their mean pitch values and stances toward prevalent transgender-related topics. These linguistic features are analyzed in relation to their self-identities and interlocutors. While gender is a common topic in sociolinguistics, studies combining transgender women's self-identity and speech styles are relatively scarce in Taiwan. This research holds significance for future inquiries into voice therapy for transgender women and offers insights into their perspectives on gender self-identification from an insider's viewpoint.

Research Overview

The motivation for this research is inspired by my personal experience. As a trans woman undergoing hormone replacement treatment (HRT) for four years, voice is always a gender traitor. Neither Estradiol Valerate (Estrade) nor Spironolactone (Spirotone), two medications that are applied for increasing estrogen and decreasing androgen in HRT, causes any change in vocal folds. Thus my voice pitch is incongruent with my appearance. However, I practiced raising my voice pitch to speak in a more feminine way to correlate my gender expression with my gender identity. I fit myself in different roles by shifting my speech styles to avoid unnecessary coming out. Namely, I speak in a higher voice pitch when I am having a conversation with interlocutors who are not acquainted with me or those who have less consciousness of my assigned sex. However, I would lower my voice pitch if my interlocutor is one of my family members or friends or someone I need to frequently interact with. Because of these experiences, I hypothesized that speakers' speech styles can shift to fit specific roles. Moreover, I have also noticed that my pitch is lowered when my conversation

gets longer and is raised if my outfit is feminine or neutral, so the length of the conversation and the outfits would also be taken into consideration.

The research background is relevant to two recent transgender issues: trans women's identity concealment and gender self-identification. Voice is one of the most influential factors for people to judge whether a person is a male or female; thus trans women are struggling with their unfeminine voices. Voice incongruity is one of the reasons that causes trans women to conceal their identity, causing speakers to have less confidence to interact with others and bringing mental problems due to the concern of being denied their identity. Trans women's identity concealment is highly related to the concept of passing. "Passing" is a term used in the trans community to describe individuals who are generally perceived as their identified gender without needing to explain or disclose their transgender identity. It signifies the ability of trans people to be recognized by others as their gender identity without overt identification. If trans people are passed enough, they can make less effort to integrate into society; on the other hand, if they are not able to pass, they would possibly suffer from social stigma or rather stay closed. Although medical treatments such as voice feminization therapy (VFT) or voice feminization surgery (VFS) are both provided, most trans women choose to receive the less effective treatment, VFT, instead of VFS due to its high risk to the receiver's vocal folds.

Another essential trans issue is trans women's gender self-identification (免術換證) policy. Nowadays, transgender people are required to undergo sex reassignment surgery (SRS), so-called transexual surgery, to reassign their legal gender. However, the population of trans who have reached the requirement is few because of its high surgery price and potential surgery risks. Due to this limitation, trans women do not have the accessibility to change their legal gender because of their incomplete surgery requirement, while this limitation seemed to

be loosened in Taiwan in 2021, September. Taipei High Administrative Court allowed a trans woman, who had not completed the sex reassignment surgery, to enter all of the female-only facilities (e.g. women's lavatories, dressing rooms, and hot spring facilities). This judgment triggered a heated debate about gender self-identification policy. Gender self-identification policy holds the concept that a person's legal gender should be determined by their gender identity, yet this proposed policy had been opposed due to the concern of the safety of female-only spaces. Hence, people who have this concern proposed to set certain criteria to distinguish people who have or do not have the qualification to get gender self-identification to prevent the potential risk from people who abuse the policy.

To discover trans women's perspectives on the question "Who counts as trans?" and explore the speech styles of trans women, this research focuses on the following three questions: (1) Does pitch differ in conversations with distinct interlocutors, and does it show differences among trans women? (2) How do trans women talk about and take stances on issues related to transgender topics? (3) How do they linguistically and discursively construct the boundary between being a trans or not being a trans?

This research recruited 18 trans women to participate in experiments and interviews. The experiment includes a beverage-ordering situation, and the interview includes sets of brief questions about personal experience and trans issues. Data analysis includes an acoustic analysis and a discourse analysis. Pitch analysis includes checking participants' mean pitch values, comparing pitch values from each of the participants, and observing the pitch differences between different conversations with different interlocutors. On the other hand, discourse analysis includes finding trans common topics, getting information about participants' self-positioning, and collecting participants' opinions toward trans issues.

This research holds significance in two aspects. Firstly, by exploring the analysis of pitch among trans women and its association with voice feminization treatment, it provides valuable evidence showing that trans women can simulate a feminized trans voice. This aligns with the objectives of voice feminization treatment, and the findings of this research can serve as crucial data for understanding the specific areas of focus within such treatments. The findings from this research can help improve voice feminization interventions, making them more attuned to the specific needs and nuances of the trans women community. Secondly, social interactions of trans women are displayed, investigating how their transgender identity influences their speech patterns. This research not only uncovers different ways trans women change their voices but also shows how they deal with transgender-related issues. By looking at how voice and social interactions connect, the research helps us understand trans women's experiences and how they navigate conversations in the broader transgender context. In simple terms, it adds a new layer to our understanding of the many aspects of transgender identity and how it comes across in communication.

Transgender Definition and Phases of Gender Transition Procedure

This section discusses the definition of transgender within the context of this study and provides an overview of each phase in the gender transition process. According to the American Psychological Association (2013), transgender people are defined as individuals whose gender identity or expression doesn't align with the sex assigned to them at birth. The term includes a diverse range of identities, such as trans women, trans men, non-binary individuals, and those identifying as genderqueer. Additionally, the transgender community is inclusive of cross-dressers (CD), transvestites (TV), drag queens, drag kings, and individuals questioning their genders. On top of that, transgender stands in contrast to cisgender,

referring to those whose gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth. While transgender people fall under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, it's crucial to distinguish gender identity from sexual orientation. Trans women pursuing medical surgeries may also be identified as transgender; however, they are often more closely associated with the definition of transsexual. Sometimes, trans women getting surgeries might not feel strongly connected to the trans community, especially since they can change the legal sex on their ID.

The gender transition procedure includes several crucial phases, each playing a distinct role in the journey of individuals aligning their gender identity with their affirmed gender. These key phases include Cross-dressing (CD), Real Life Experience (RLE), Gender Identity Disorder (GID), Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), and Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS).

Cross-dressing (CD), while not universally synonymous with being transgender, is a prevalent exploration during the gender questioning period. It serves as an initial step for many individuals in understanding and expressing their gender identity. Following this, the Real Life Experience (RLE) becomes a pivotal phase, whereby individuals immerse themselves in living authentically in their affirmed gender. RLE is a diagnostic criterion for gender disorder or incongruence, with psychiatrists issuing Gender Identity Disorder (GID) certification after the patient successfully completes a specified period of RLE and passes a series of examinations. GID certification holds significant implications for accessing subsequent phases of the transition process. It empowers transgender individuals to obtain hormone treatments, including pills, gels, or injections, from obstetricians specializing in transsexual medical treatment. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) follows, with patients typically undergoing this treatment for two to three years before considering the next phase: Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). To proceed with SRS, individuals must acquire two GID

certifications from different psychiatrists, demonstrating a sustained commitment to their affirmed gender identity.

Upon successfully undergoing SRS, individuals have the opportunity to legally reassign their gender, reflecting the alignment of their gender identity with their legal documentation. Interestingly, some individuals who have completed this transition and legally reassigned their gender still identify as transgender, underscoring the ongoing importance of this term in reflecting their unique experiences. Even though the transition process covers many steps, some people still face challenges getting hormone therapy (HRT) and surgery (SRS) because of money or health issues. This highlights how important it is for individuals to recognize and affirm their gender identity, especially when they encounter obstacles during different parts of their transition.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes a comprehensive exploration of sociolinguistic and transgender background knowledge relevant to this research. In sections §2.1 to §2.3, we explore a variety of studies in sociolinguistics that look into identity, speech style, and stancetaking. These studies shed light on how individuals express their identities and perspectives through different speech styles. In sections §2.4 and §2.5, we narrow our focus to examine studies specifically related to the interaction between language and gender. These comprehensive reviews establish a strong foundation for the subsequent analysis in this research, highlighting the relationship between linguistic features and the formation of gendered identities and perspectives.

Identity in Sociolinguistics

In this research, the term "identity" takes on a distinct meaning compared to its everyday usage. One of the most well-known concepts about "identity" is proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005). In their conclusion, identity in sociolinguistics is viewed as a socially and discursively constructed phenomenon that is related to contextual factors, linguistic practices, and the dynamics of social interaction, that is, our language choices are not just utilized for communication, but also for expressing who we are and connecting with others based on shared identities. Their research further encourages people to not only consider identity as a general and sociological category, but also as a specific concept which is ethnographic and interactional. We use discourse to express who we are or what we believe, including labels, implied meanings, attitudes, styles, and even dialects. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) also reminded that identity is not a fixed concept and continuously shaped through individuals' interaction and other social environments.