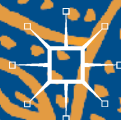# SPEAKING AS WOMEN LEADERS

Meetings in Middle Eastern and Western Contexts

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Speaking as Women Leaders

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Preface

by Haleema Al A'ali

As a Middle Eastern woman raised in a conservative community with strong views on women and their place in the society, and then later being exposed to western research with its diverse philosophical and ideological roots, my conception of what 'being a woman' means has changed drastically and is still changing. I have shifted from a firm belief that men and women are biologically inclined to speak, act, and feel in a certain way to the realisation that gender is a social category which is enacted and performed at any given time.

In my childhood, I don't recall any specific incident of being mistreated, undervalued or disempowered in my household. If anything, I was the most opinionated and intimidating member of my family. I thought this (women's powerful status in the private sphere) was a crucial aspect which perhaps western scholarship overlooked. I firmly resolved that one day, with the power of research, I would help change the way the international community perceive Middle Eastern women. However, my understanding of 'power' changed over the years as I started thinking about my future. In my rather conservative household, the prospect of work for women was a complicated one. While we were not banned from pursuing careers, we were only allowed to study specialisations which would ultimately lead to specific future jobs that were compatible with 'women's biological nature' and in alignment with their 'natural maternal role' such as teaching and nursing. In fact, I studied English Language and Literature because studying Business or other technical majors was not an option.

I realise now that it is the wider societal discourses that ultimately render women powerless in the region. It is the lack of opportunities; it is

the restrictions created by variable understandings of religious sources in Islam, namely the Quran (God's words) and Hadith (the Prophet's preaching and practices) which are influenced by long-standing cultural values in Arabia, and enforced by a patriarchal society in order to maintain a chaste community where women are burdened with holding the honour and reflecting the identity of a nation. Growing up, I had always heard that women are preservers of our culture, and that a society is as good as the chastity of its women. Honour and chastity are values on which our societies are built. To preserve women, they are guarded in their homes; women are highly respected and revered by society if they observe these traditions.

Yet, Bahraini society nowadays is not the same. There is choice now and the doors have opened up for women to participate in the public sphere, and they have gladly seized the opportunity. During the time of writing this book, the United Arab Emirates has broken long established traditions and taken a courageous decision to appoint five young women (ranging in age from 23 to 38) to be ministers. Such actions have transformed politics for men and women in the region and have brought about change faster than anticipated. A greater role for women in government and working life could be the future of the region and the future of Bahrain. In my Business classes, the vast majority of my students are women. They are studying to enter the workforce and striving to take up managerial positions in the future. In them I see determination and a thirst to compete with their male counterparts. I also see desire for change. Therefore, my ultimate goal for co-writing this book is to give these students of mine and all aspiring Middle Eastern women an opportunity, a voice. Judith and I have a firm belief that research in the language of women's leadership can provide linguistic tools that all women (in the east and the west), when given the opportunity, can use to rise to the top of their professions and become successful leaders. Through research, we aim to present examples of different ways of 'doing leadership' successfully. Leadership is to a great extent subject to the individual context but many features are common across the world. The Middle East with its distinct social, political and economic variables is experiencing a giant cultural leap, and women are in the forefront of this change. We hope this book will bring insights into the ways women lead in a changing global scene and serve as an inspiration at such a pivotal moment in history.

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Women Leaders in the Middle East and the West

Abstract This chapter sets the scene for the rest of the book by presenting its purpose, theoretical framework, the cultural backgrounds to the UK and Bahraini studies, and a review of research literature on women in leadership that has been conducted in those two contexts. Drawing on three Bahraini and three UK case studies of women business leaders, the aim of this book is to explore the ways in which senior women perform leadership within their communities of practice, and to produce insights on the relationship between gender and leadership language within Bahraini and UK cultural contexts.

Keywords Leadership • Gender • Communities of practice • Identity • Discourses • Middle East

INTRODUCTION

Can you guess which of the two senior leadership meetings below is held by a Western European company based in central London, UK, and which is held by a Bahraini company in the Middle East? The following extracts are both taken from the very start of the meeting, each of which was conducted in English and chaired by the leader of the management team:

Meeting 1: Designing publicity

(C=Chair/leader; M=team member; B=team member. There is small talk between members of the meeting for around 5 minutes)

```
1 C:  I think er it's time to start (.) and er everybody↑ (eye contact with
2     all the participants to signal the beginning of the meeting) ah (.) I
3     did the er follow-up in the progress er meeting (.) in our er last
4     meeting we left with er certain action items (.) and I think the
5     designs is one of them (.) er have you looked at it from the PR
6     side↑?
7 M:  yeah we have a few comments
8 C:  can we see them from [er
9 M:                       [you have comments on the er drawings↑
10 C: yes Mona can we see er (Mona hands her the drawings)(3) now what is
11    this for↑ (.) can we take them one by one↑
12B:  yeah let's take the invitation first
```

Meeting 2: Launching the newsletter

(C=Chair/leader; A=team member; B=team member. There is small talk between members of the meeting for around 5 minutes)

```
1 C:  okay (.) shall we start? um let's at the end of each session do what
2     we said in terms of saying what communications are out to the rest of
3     the company in terms of through the line (.) what goes into the
4     newsletter (.)
5     anything else we said? what was the third one? newsletter? through
6     the line?
7 A:  team meetings wasn't it?
8 C:  yeah (.) that's through the line (.)=
9 B:                                      =through the line
10 C: I thought there was a third? (2) I can't remember (.) we'll see as we
11    go anyway and phones on silent (.)=
12 A:                                   =er if you've got them =
13 C:                                                          =if you've
14    got them
```

We imagine you might have some difficulty in deciding which meeting is based in a Bahraini company and which in a UK company. Furthermore, if you were to make a guess at the gender identity of the Chair, we would wager that their gender is not obviously signified by the language used in the extracts. This is not simply because the extracts are too brief to provide sufficient linguistic evidence; sociolinguists can learn a great deal about the identities of speakers from tiny 'contextualisation cues' (Gumperz 1982) supplied in short transcripts of interactional data. More likely, the

reason is that senior meetings in international companies increasingly follow generic patterns. In all probability, you could walk into a leadership meeting anywhere in the world and be able to follow their conventions and processes (Handford 2010). Such conventions often override aspects of cultural and gender identity, and yet such features may be subtly indicated. By conducting a brief analysis of the contextualisation cues in the two extracts, we can see that, in many ways, the interactions of participants are quite similar.

Both meetings begin with the female Chair using a metapragmatic signal to her team to start the meeting. In Meeting 1, the Bahraini leader follows her comment 'it's time to start' with eye contact and use of the inclusive pronoun 'everybody'. In Meeting 2, the UK leader uses the discourse marker 'okay' and follows this with a question to gain people's attention. In Meeting 1, the Bahraini leader supplies some contextual information to locate the purpose of the meeting, while in Meeting 2, the UK leader also helps to orientate her team by saying what she expects the team to achieve. Both leaders set the scene in the space of a minute or so before they use questions to elicit responses from team members. After four or five lines, both leaders then open up discussion to the floor by means of a question. In the first case, the Bahraini leader issues a request and is quickly corrected by a colleague for not noting the answer to the request as it has already been provided to her on the drawings. In the second case, the UK leader has to correct one of her colleagues for not understanding the point behind her request. In both extracts, there are indications that the interaction is driven by the leader but that discussion is open, democratic and purposeful. Overall, each leader combines subtle interactive techniques with a strong sense of business purpose. In both cases, the leader opens their meeting apparently quite effortlessly, concealing the degree of skill it can take to get a team of people who are engaging in small talk to focus instantly on the task in hand (Holmes and Stubbe 2003).

Despite the subtle, generic skills shown by both leaders above, senior management positions for women remain the exception rather than the rule around the world. However, it might be reasonably supposed that certain countries, cultures and institutions support the participation and career progression of senior women more than others. From a western perspective, it might seem that Middle Eastern women leaders face more challenges and barriers than their counterparts in Western Europe. Although women business leaders are in a relatively small minority in

both geographical regions, Western European women appear to be faring better than those in the Middle East. While in the UK, 18% of the top 250 executive positions are currently occupied by women, this figure remains substantially less at 2.2% in the Middle East (Vinnicombe et al. 2015). Furthermore, westerners might associate countries in the Middle East with more traditional views about gender, emanating from the fusion of religion with personal, professional and national constructs of identity (Kelly and Breslin 2010; Metcalfe 2007). Western European women benefit from a range of political, educational and economic legislation that, in principle, supports career opportunities for women. However, we will question such Eurocentric assumptions in our book. Sadaqi (2003) powerfully argues that western perspectives on Middle Eastern women are often stereotyped and that these women are in many ways socially heterogeneous in ways that are under-appreciated by western scholars.

In line with our linguistic analysis of the two meetings above, this book is premised on the constitutive power of leadership language: that is, leaders construct their sense of 'who they are' through the medium of language. Authors from both sociolinguistics (e.g. Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007; Schnurr 2009) and organisation studies (e.g. Alvesson and Karreman 2000; Clifton 2012; Cunliffe 2001; Fairhurst 2007) contend that language is a principal means of constructing people's professional identities. From this perspective, it should be possible to learn whether or not language is gendered in leadership settings, and whether this might have professional and career implications for women. Feminist linguists of a 'postmodern turn' (Cameron 2005: 487) argue that 'discourses' ('ways of seeing the world'; Sunderland 2004: 6) generate gendered expectations of how senior women and men *should* speak and interact, to which individuals often conform, but can resist. This 'discursive' or 'poststructuralist' perspective of leadership identity views language as providing sets of 'resources' or strategies. Accordingly, certain individuals may have greater *access* to these resources than others, depending on approved identity factors such as their age, gender, ethnicity, education, professional status, and so on (see p. 10 below).

In this book, we explore the experience of leadership as performed by six women in senior positions (henceforth, 'senior women') working in international companies based in two different parts of the world: Bahrain

and the United Kingdom (UK). We conducted two entirely separate research studies in our respective countries (Al A'ali in Bahrain; Baxter in the UK), yet our aims, theoretical framework and many elements of the research design and delivery were very similar. Given these parallels, we wish to discover what reciprocal insights might emerge from bringing our two studies together. Overall, we want to find out what leadership 'looks and sounds like' for women leaders in each setting, and how women use language to perform leadership roles with their management teams on a daily basis. More specifically, we wish to find out about the challenges and opportunities women experience during routine linguistic interactions with colleagues. To what extent is the use of language a barrier or an enabler within contexts such as senior management meetings? Ultimately such an investigation leads to the question of perceived 'effectiveness': if a woman leader is considered effective by her colleagues and the organisation, she is more likely to progress to increasingly senior positions. What constitutes an 'effective leader' in contexts where women are in the minority, and to what extent are such measures of effectiveness likely to be gendered? This interest in understanding what 'effectiveness' means in each context, is a question that neither of us had originally considered in our separate studies.

We argue that senior women in both Bahrain and the UK learn to utilise complex leadership practices that must be approved by their male-dominated companies. These versions of leadership are 'indexed' by a range of conventional and individually driven linguistic acts that women perform to accomplish their roles successfully within their own cultural contexts (Ochs 1992: 341). We propose that senior women in *both* regions experience greater challenges than men do at a senior level within their organisations, and learn to devote extra 'linguistic work' (Baxter 2010: 101), which is often very subtle, to meet expectations of effective leadership. Women in both regions are venturing into the unknown, and potentially creating new and ground-breaking versions of leadership, albeit within differing sociocultural contexts.

In the following sections, we situate our research within the sociolinguistic field of gender, language and leadership, and use this as a basis for refining our research aims, key concepts, theoretical framework and plan of action for the book.

Theoretical Background

We first review key concepts and theories related to the field of gender, language and leadership, and to which we regularly refer throughout this book: gender, leadership, culture, communities of practice ('CofPs'); and a feminist poststructuralist theory of language and identity. This is followed by a review of research literature in the field as it pertains to the Middle East and to western/UK contexts.

Gender

Our understanding of gender is in line with the 'discursive' perspective described above, which views our identities as culturally and *discursively* constructed through speech and actions. In other words, we negotiate who we are and the impression we wish to create by means of a range of culturally approved ways of using language and 'discourses' (Foucault 1972). Rather than the essentialist view that an individual is defined by their biological/sociocultural status as a 'man' or a 'woman', a discursive perspective considers that gender categories are fluid and unstable, enacted through discourses and repeatedly performed (Butler 1990; Cameron 2005). Butler (1990: 33) claims that '"feminine" and "masculine" are not what we are, nor traits we have, but effects we produce by way of particular things we do'. She further argues that femininity and masculinity conform to a 'rigid regulatory frame' that constrains the ways in which gendered identities can be performed. For example, individuals identifying as men are inculcated into masculinity by means of discourses that endorse the routine repetition of speech and behaviour: for example, the convention of wearing a suit to work is a crucial way in which men in the western world learn to be high-status, professional men.

It could be argued that if gender scholars also continue to use terms like 'men' and 'women' while purportedly critiquing dominant gender relations, they are simply legitimising heteronormative conceptions that gender binaries are natural and unchanging. An alternative perspective is that these symbolically loaded terms are strategically necessary to enable a minority group (such as 'women leaders') to identify itself, re-appropriate the terms, create support networks, and address specific problems. The gender 'problem' addressed in this book is that leadership is still viewed as a distinctly masculine construct (e.g. Vinnicombe et al. 2015), which continues to define itself on the basis of a person's presumed gender. Women

are still viewed as outsiders in the business world, who are perceived to aspire inappropriately to the privileges of a male-dominated business world (Kanter 1993). Thus, gender, as one distinguishing aspect of professional identity (Holmes 2007), is made strongly relevant as a topic of research within the context of business leadership in the workplace.

The terms 'women' and 'men' in this book are used in recognition that this is an area where individuals continue to experience discrimination around the world on the basis of their presumed gender category. Our use of the conventional terms does not deny that many individuals would not label themselves accordingly, and it is important that we remain reflexive about this throughout the book. We would far rather conceptualise gender as encompassing a spectrum of identities (including those individuals who identify as transgendered, gender-fluid, or as no gender category at all), and currently, we consider the English language and the cultural systems supporting it, to be woefully inadequate in answering this challenge. On this point, Holmes (2007: 60) convincingly suggests that any study of the linguistic reasons why women are under-represented at leadership level may well require the selection of a 'strategic essentialist' approach that temporarily puts 'women back at the centre of language and gender research'. As two poststructuralist scholars who value highly pragmatic approaches to achieve transformation in social practices, we consider this to be our way forward in this book.

Leadership

Leadership is a complex and much contested construct that has been studied from myriad perspectives both in sociolinguistic and organisational fields. A strong theme across these fields is to gain a better understanding of what constitutes leadership within real professional contexts, and which factors have an influence on leadership performance and its perceived 'effectiveness' (Singh 2008). Early assumptions that leaders were born rather than made, sometimes known without irony as 'the great man theory', were replaced by theories about different leadership styles. One of the most influential (e.g. Burns 1978) modelled effective leadership on the distinction between 'transactional' and 'transformational' styles of leadership. A leader with a predominantly transactional style views job performance as a series of short-term tasks to be accomplished by their subordinates, which are exchanged for 'rewards' for productive behaviour (e.g. higher pay, promotion) or 'punishment' for inadequate

performance (e.g. being demoted, passed over for promotion). A leader with a predominantly 'transformational style' is one who can motivate and 'transform' their own and their colleagues' self-interests into the interest of the group in order to achieve longer-term, institutional goals. This is achieved through enthusiasm, energy, engagement with others, sharing authority and information, and encouraging participation from everyone. The ideal leader, according to Burns (1978) is one who can harness and balance both the transactional and transformational aspects, although the latter style is seen as significantly more commensurate with higher-level, strategic leadership.

An alternative, discursive approach to conceptualising leadership, and the one adopted in this book, is in terms of the ways leaders use language to accomplish their business goals on a daily basis. Leadership can be viewed as almost literally 'constructed' through the step-by-step linguistic choices that speakers make as they perform leadership in the course of key decision-making forums such as meetings. It is a commonsense observation that senior people no longer need to demonstrate their leadership primarily through *physical* or *material* actions such as leading people into battle, or seizing territory or building cities (although this still happens). Instead, modern-day business leadership is primarily achieved linguistically, through the power of discourse. From a discursive perspective, we can therefore (re)define leadership as the types of verbal and non-verbal actions ('discursive practices') that leaders accomplish in their daily, professional interactions, often in interactive forums such as leadership meetings. If language, both verbal and non-verbal, is viewed as sets of resources that leaders potentially have at their disposal, these can achieve leadership actions such as persuading people to do things, solving problems, making decisions, allocating responsibilities to colleagues, and so on.

For the purpose of this book, we define the term 'leadership' flexibly: ranging from discursive practices that constitute a formal or informal role enacted by one person who may take some form of authority over others, to socially situated sets of linguistic resources that are distributed and collaboratively enacted by members of a leadership team (e.g. Kets de Fries et al. 2010). In other words, leadership can be 'owned' by a single person, or it can be shared out and negotiated among a team of people. In principle, a leader may be nominally the head of a team and the Chair of a meeting, but in practice, s/he may operate within a more egalitarian

structure whereby some or all members of the team share the responsibility for devising and executing institutional policies.

Culture and Communities of Practice (CofPs)

Informed by Holliday's (2013) theory of 'small cultures', we will not be seeking to compare Western European and Middle Eastern contexts explicitly, which would lead to simplistic generalisations about national or regional cultures. While we consider cases of women leaders from a range of international companies based in the UK, they do not necessarily represent companies and practices across the Western European world. While we explore several cases of women leaders from an international company based in Bahrain, these cannot represent what happens across the Middle East, and so, we will try not to present the cases in this way. Instead, we focus on the particularity, detail and richness of each case by utilising the Community of Practice (CofP) model (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1998; Lave and Wenger 1991), which offers an alternative to making sweeping generalisations about cultural differences between leaders who live and work in different parts of the world. The CofP approach is compatible with the discursive view of gender above, because of its interest in actions and processes as the means for constructing communities, such as a leadership team that meets regularly and works closely together. Cameron (1996: 45) explains why the two approaches are theoretically compatible:

> Throughout our lives we go on entering new communities of practice: we must constantly produce our gendered identities by performing what are taken to be the appropriate acts in the communities we belong to – or else challenge prevailing gender norms by refusing to perform those acts.

While the original concept is attributed to Lave and Wenger (1991) in relation to 'situated learning', the CofP concept has been adapted to gender and language studies by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998: 464) amongst others, who define it as:

> An aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of mutual endeavour.

By highlighting the individual cases of senior women as they work within team meetings, this study should make visible the heterogeneous ways in which they perform their leadership roles, identities and relationships within their distinctive CofPs. However, following McElhinny (2003: 30), we also view CofPs as 'determined by their place within larger social structures'. We harness the concept to refer to the regular context of senior management meetings as 'workplace interactions [which] tend to be strongly embedded in the business and social context of a particular work group, the community of practice, as well as in a wider socio-cultural or institutional order' (Holmes 2006: 13). Just as Holliday (2013: 163) considers that in 'small culture formation', there are always 'underlying universal cultural processes' that reflect 'larger cultural profiles', so in this book we expect to detect traces of discourses indicative of the wider culture within our analyses of the interactions in leadership team meetings (see Chaps. 3, 4 and 5).

As authors, another cultural consideration is that the Western European research context with its greater weight of research literature should not overshadow the research we conduct in the non-traditional and under-researched context of Bahrain, which may therefore be of greater interest and priority to scholars of gender, language and leadership worldwide. In order to overcome this anticipated predilection, we have a number of strategies in place. First, review and discussion of the Bahraini studies are placed *before* the UK-based studies in this chapter and throughout the book. Second, alongside the collective authorial voice ('we'), we also give space to the voice of each individual author as appropriate. So, while we use the first person plural authorial voice ('we') in Chaps. 1, 2, 5 and 6 to explain our joint approaches and insights, we use the first person singular voice ('I') in the two case study chapters (Al A'ali in Chap. 3; Baxter in Chap. 4). Furthermore, the review of Middle Eastern literature in Chap. 1 is written by Al A'ali, while the review of western literature is written by Baxter. Thus the voice, tone and style of these chapters and sections will differ. Finally, Al A'ali has written a special section on her research for the Preface.

A Feminist Poststructuralist Theory of Language and Identity

The core concepts in this book are brought together by our use of feminist poststructuralist (FP) theory to explore the relationship between gender, language and leadership identities. A poststructuralist perspective has

much in common with the discursive perspective on language and identity (see above) in that both posit that individuals are never outside discourses but always subject to them. A poststructuralist perspective owes much to the work of Foucault (1972) with his interest in the relationship between discourses and 'subjectivity'. According to this, people's identities are governed by a range of 'subject positions' ('ways of being'), legitimised by institutions, and made available to them by means of the particular discourses operating within their local contexts. In the corporate world, if people do not conform to approved discourses in terms of how they speak, interact and behave, they may be stigmatised by others by means of linguistic strategies such as put-downs, sarcasm, abusive humour, or exclusion from a key conversation. There are numerous ways in which both verbal and non-verbal language can act through institutional discourses as a regulatory force to pressurise individuals to conform to socially approved patterns of speech and behaviour (Foucault 1972; Weedon 1997).

The regulatory effects of discourses upon identity construction can be observed within leadership contexts. Here, leaders and their colleagues are subject to a range of institutional discourses offering knowledge about approved 'ways of being' in terms of their speech, behaviour and interactions with colleagues and clients. These discourses are interwoven with broader societal discourses, embracing dominant perspectives on age, gender, ethnicity, class, status, and so forth. Many approved discourses in the workplace offer competing positions for a women leader in contexts where leadership is perceived as a masculine construct (Still 2006). On one hand, she may find herself positioned by a 'discourse of equal opportunities' (Mullany 2007: 203) as a female employee who has benefitted from 'diversity' policies, and therefore is seen as a company 'success story'. On the other hand, she may find herself positioned by senior colleagues according to a discourse of 'emotionality/irrationality' as 'acting emotionally' in board meetings (Litosseliti 2006: 49). This may work to negate the positive effects of the 'success story' discourse. Of course, not all discourses are institutionally approved or regulated. Leaders may invoke resistant discourses – such as a discourse of 'feminism' (Mullany 2007: 203) – in reaction to dominant institutional value systems, giving individuals a space in which to retrieve some agency and empowerment. All subject positions can be invoked or resisted within different contexts by a woman leader herself or by her associates. Indeed, a leader may be required to *shift* between competing subject positions in order to resist particular positions or, more positively, to achieve her diverse goals.

In such contexts, individuals are shaped by the possibility of multiple (though not limitless) subject positions within and across different and competing discourses. Belsey (1980: 132) claims that individuals must be thought of as 'unfixed, unsatisfied…. not a unity, not autonomous, but a process, perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change'.

The connection between poststructuralist and feminist perspectives lies in their mutual interest in deconstructing systems of power that work to deny individuals a 'voice' because they are women (or men) within particular contexts (Weedon 1997). Modernist feminists are concerned with the continued inequalities and injustices that women experience as a social category, which they consider amounts to systemic discrimination (Mills and Mullany 2011). As an example of this, we could include the systemic reasons why women internationally fail to get promoted to senior posts, and receive lower pay for the same work (Vinnicombe et al. 2015). In contrast, feminist poststructuralists critique the idea that women across the globe uniformly experience discrimination on this or any other gender issue (Mills and Mullany 2011). In the case of women leaders, a few do succeed in reaching very senior levels, yet many others continue to face discrimination principally on the grounds of their gender. To investigate why many women continue to experience discrimination in both Middle Eastern and western contexts, we now review research literature that theorises the relationship between gender, language and leadership.

Research on Gender, Language and Leadership

Most gender and language research on women in leadership has been conducted from a Western European, North American or Australasian perspective (e.g. Baxter 2010; Cameron 2005; Ford 2007; Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Holmes 2006; Koller 2004; Mullany 2007; Schnurr 2009; Wodak 1997), with a more limited literature on gender, language and Middle Eastern leadership (e.g. Metcalfe 2007; Rice 1999; Robertson et al. 2002; Sadiqi 2003; Weir 2000). This is partly because women leaders remain a relatively rare presence in Middle Eastern workplaces, although there is some evidence that this is changing, as we review below. As the two contexts vary so much, we have diverged in our approach to reviewing the literature in our fields. In terms of the Middle East and Bahrain,

Al A'ali discusses the relationship between the broader Arabic context and its gender ideologies, and follows this with a review of the relatively scant literature on women in leadership. In terms of western research, Baxter discusses the sociolinguistic problem of the lack of women leaders; she follows this with a review of three principal ways in which the field of gender, language and leadership is currently theorised.

Middle Eastern and Bahraini Contexts

The Middle East is a vast region encompassing Arab and non-Arab countries; it is highly diverse in many aspects among which are the ethnic composition of the population, the history, politics, economic resources, educational systems, literacy rates, and rules and norms governing public and private domains (Metcalfe 2007). According to Marmenout (2009: 4) '[r]ather than being a monolithic bloc, the Middle East can be seen as a cultural, economic, political, and religious mosaic. Diverse historical backgrounds, successive foreign influences, the disparities in natural resources and demographics have created a set of widely differing societies and economies'.

The Arab world, a sub-region of the Middle East in which Arabic is the native language, comprises 22 countries. Islam is the dominant religion; since its inception, it has played a major role in the formation of Middle Eastern societies and has become the main generator of meaning and values among Muslims (Marmenout 2009). In the majority of Muslim countries, there is no divide between the state and religion; state laws are often derived from Sharia law. The latter are varied interpretations of the Quran and the Sunna (the practices of the Prophet Muhammed), and they constitute the legal framework of most of the Muslim countries, including commercial, administrative, and human rights laws. Nevertheless, there are many sects and factions in Muslim communities that hold different understandings and interpretations of Islamic teachings, and vary in the extent to which they apply Sharia rules (Metcalfe 2009).

Despite this variation, there are many homogenous aspects stemming from the shared language, religion, and cultural heritage of the Arab world. Anthropological research in the region (e.g. Kabasakal and Bodur 2002) has found that Arab-Islamic societies are prominently masculinist, collectivist, and hierarchical. As Barakat (2004) reports, the most notable characteristic of Arab-Islamic society lies in its patriarchal or

male-governed practices. Scholars such as Keddie (2006) argue that patri-archy is a product of Arabic traditions which have existed long before Islam, and which have been maintained by the highly tribal and hierarchi-cal system in the Arab world.

In recent times, Arab Gulf women's positioning in society has gradually changed following the discovery of oil and gas in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region in the early twentieth century, which resulted in an unprecedented economic boom in the area. Parallel to the changes in economy, Gulf states underwent a dramatic shift in all aspects of society especially in relation to gender dynamics. Their rise into wealth and a central role in the world's economy have placed the Gulf states under scrutiny by the international community. Owing to international pressure, governments in the region have rewritten labour market policies to ensure the inclusion of women in the workplace; in countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, political leaders have placed pressure on corporations to put forward a plan for women's empowerment. For example, in the highly traditional, patriarchal society of the UAE, the gov-ernment's cabinet issued a ruling in 2012 instructing that a minimum of one woman should be appointed a member on the board of all gov-ernment and semi-government establishments (McKinsey & Company 2014). These changing practices have certainly affected the ways in which some aspects of leadership are practised in the country of Bahrain, the particular focus of the three case studies in this book.

Bahrain, a small country comprising a series of islands in the Arabian Gulf, is considered a highly progressive state with a mixture of cultures and religious backgrounds, and is proving to be an exemplar for the empowerment of women in the region (Al Gharaibeh 2011). Bahraini women were the first among the Arabian Gulf states to be given the right to vote, to have full participation in elections, and to be elected as Members of Parliament (MPs). According to the Economic Development Board's 2013 report, there are 15 female MPs in the National Assembly. In the workplace, women account for 35 % of the overall labour force and 37 % in the financial sector. Furthermore, a recent study to index wom-en's advancement found that the socio-economic parity between men and women in Bahrain was the closest in the region. The research, which measured educational attainment, employment opportunities and political participation, concluded that Bahraini women were the most empowered in the Middle East (Chong 2013).

Fundamentally, the dominant Islamic gender system, along with traditional Arabic values and practices, constitute the two main value systems that work together to shape the dynamics of social structures in Arab-Islamic societies, and co-construct and maintain women's positioning in public and private domains. Middle Eastern research literature focuses on the fusion of personal, professional, religious and cultural values that have affected women's positioning in these societies and the nature of their participation in the workplace. Islam, as the dominant religion in most (if not all) Middle Eastern countries, is seen as a system that governs the 'well-being' of men and women in society (Ali et al. 2003; Metcalfe 2007). It is arguably the main generator of meaning in all aspects of individuals' lives – in both the public and private spheres.

In most Islamic states, laws (especially family laws) are derived from Islamic Sharia law – the set of rules based on the interpretation of divine laws as expressed in the Quran and by the Prophet (Vikør 1998). With regard to women, these rules are perceived by many to be 'gender-biased'. Metcalfe (2007: 60) argues that '[t]he Quran, although it promotes equality, does emphasise difference'. In other words, while Islamic Sharia laws call for sameness of treatment for all people, regardless of their gender, they denote an essentialist notion of biological difference between men and women, who are believed to be naturally capable of playing distinct roles in society and carrying out different responsibilities. Thus, men and women are assigned different but complementary roles, rights and responsibilities in society (Metcalfe 2007). This view, which has long been the guiding principle behind the gender system in Middle Eastern societies, has created and shaped predominant traditions of gender difference which have worked to restrict women's participation in the workplace (Al-Lail 1996). Throughout Islamic history, women have been traditionally associated with the private sphere of family (maintaining the household, raising children, etc.), and men with the public sphere of business (e.g. El-Rahmony 2002).

Yet perhaps the most influential factor and limitation in Middle Eastern women's experiences is perceived to be the cultural element. Traditionally, Middle Eastern societies are, and have always been, patriarchal. The patriarchal system privileges males and elders, and therefore the most powerful individuals in society are often the eldest males (Barakat 2004). Another influential aspect of Middle Eastern societies lies in their collectivist nature. Individuals, especially women, are considered as inseparable from their families and communities (Joseph and Slyomovices 2001). In fact, notions

of personal autonomy and independence are often regarded negatively by traditional Arabs. In such collectively-oriented societies, the notion of loyalty is essential, as there is pressure to conform and sacrifice one's personal wishes for the interest of the whole (that is, the family, community, organisation, etc. [Whitaker 2009]).

The opportunities and aspirations of Middle Eastern women vary tremendously according to the specific country with its political, historical, economic, and social dynamics (Al-Wer 2014). Scholars caution against making grand generalisations about women in such a diverse region as the Middle East. For example, the inhabitants of the GCC were Bedouins who have a long history as traditionally male-dominated communities and tribes (Abu Bakr 2002). Al-Lamky (2007: 49) describes countries in this region as 'bastions of patriarchy and male chauvinism' where leadership is strictly reserved to men, especially in the public sphere of politics and the workplace which, until just recently, has been a predominantly male arena.

The Bahraini government has also shown commitment to women's rights by supporting a newly established women's organisation, the Supreme Council for Women (SCW), which is currently under the leadership of Shaikha Sabeekha, King Hamid's wife, and directly reports to him (Metcalfe 2011). Since its inception in 2001, the SCW has been working to empower Bahraini women in all aspects of their lives, stepping over the pre-existing boundaries that have worked for years to limit women in the Gulf region. Following the King's national strategy for the advancement of women, SCW has initiated a number of empowerment programmes targeting women's advancement in all fields, with a special focus on economic, political and family stability programmes; the latter is considered crucial, bearing in mind the cultural context (The Supreme Council for Women 2014). These programmes include creating equal opportunities, or what has become known as 'gender mainstreaming'. The idea behind gender mainstreaming is to develop a society in which men and women are equally involved in all aspects of society, both public and private. This necessitates taking drastic measures to ensure women's rights as equal partners, including reformulating development programmes, allocating funds, rewriting laws, etc. It is a collective effort which requires full support of authorities and governmental and non-governmental establishments, especially in the workplace domain.

Middle Eastern Research

Research on gender as a social construct in the Middle East is developing, and it primarily addresses issues related to gender equality and women's rights, rather than language. Al-Wer (2014) notes that the few existing studies in the region adopt a 'gender difference' perspective based on the view of language as a polarised set of speech styles denoting men's and women's language (e.g. Coates 2004; Holmes 1990; Tannen 1990). When the gender -difference-based Islamic principle combines with a traditionally male-dominated, patriarchal, collectivist society, they construct women's position as inferior and restrict their participation in the public spheres of politics and the workplace (Sabbagh 2005). Patriarchy, which is prevalent in all aspects of society, family, and organisations, obviously works to disempower women. Also, as a consequence of the prevailing gender difference discourse, women's work in the Middle East is considered less necessary. Their 'natural' place is seen to be in the confines of their homes. When women work, they are perceived as less proficient, being placed out of their 'natural' element, and they are therefore marked as deviant (El-Rahmony 2002).

Despite some recent changes in the empowerment of women (see above), research in the Arabian Gulf region has found that the private domain of the family is still perceived as women's main priority. The reform plans implemented by some countries have faced significant resistance to women's equality (Freedom House 2010; Walby 2009). This is due to the prevailing patriarchal and traditional masculinist attitudes in Gulf countries, despite the ongoing debate on the interpretation of Islamic Sharia law with regard to women's role in the public sphere (Ramadan 2009). As reported by Marmenout (2009), while the late Sheik Zayed of the United Arab Emirates was known for his support of women's career progression to leadership, he also encouraged Emirati women to keep to roles which are more compatible with their 'nature'. Therefore, even with the new labour market policies, women still hold positions which are deemed appropriate for their gender, such as in the education and health care sectors (Metcalfe et al. 2010).

In fact, research has found that women themselves are not challenging the Islamic gender regime (Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies 2004; Metcalfe 2011; Ramadan 2009). Many studies in the region call for

women's empowerment initiatives and programmes which are culture-specific and bear in mind the priority of family, calling for a rewriting of labour laws and policies in a way that can help women to combine their duties in both public and private domains. For example, Marmenout (2009) argues that Gulf women can seek career fulfilment and empowerment while preserving gender-role norms. She recommends a number of coping mechanisms to help them accomplish their career goals without challenging men's power; these include pursuing entrepreneurship and seeking public office employment. When in leadership positions, she further suggests, women should use 'shadow leadership', which requires flexibility and special skills in navigating and influencing a workplace dominated by males by working in the background or 'behind the scenes'. This, she argues, can benefit women in the region.

A report by McKinsey & Company (2014) on women's potential in management in the GCC has found that the biggest challenges for women are the double burden of family and work, stereotypes and biases towards women, and the limited opportunities provided in the current organisational structure. The study reports that despite the changes in women's participation in leadership positions in the GCC, they hold less than 1% of executive committee and board positions. The report drew findings from over 550 surveys and 50 interviews with male and female middle and senior managers across a diverse sample of public and private organisations in the region. The study found that the majority of survey respondents (both men and women) believe that women are capable of leadership and they bring a unique aspect to the board. The study calls for a plan of action for 2020 for corporations in the GCC. It encourages these Gulf countries to focus on creating models of good practice through enabling women in middle management to reach senior leadership positions, and focusing on changing stereotypes and cultural attitudes that inhibit women from achieving top positions.

Overall, research shows that Middle Eastern women are still struggling to achieve some sort of equality in the workplace, and to overcome attitudes that prevent them from becoming leaders. The limited Islamic scholarship in gender and leadership shows that while women are granted the right to work, labour law are often shaped by *urf* (custom) and Sharia law. Furthermore, even when women 'shatter the glass ceiling' and become leaders and managers, they are often 'constituted along patriarchal lines with women's role as Mother emphasized' (Metcalfe 2007: 58).

UK and Western European Context

Despite around 50 years of equal opportunities and educational reforms in the UK and elsewhere, and increasing numbers of women in management positions, there is still a notable minority of women in leadership positions, although this is now improving. According to the *Female FTSE Board Report* (Vinnicombe et al. 2015), the annual barometer of senior women's progress to top positions in the UK, women leaders make up 23.5% boards of the top 100 British companies (in comparison with 12.5% in 2011) and 18% of the top 250 companies (compared to 7.8% in 2011). Women are still missing from the boards of corporations despite the fact that European governments are arguing strongly for their participation in executive decision-making. Boards are now expected to reflect the gender composition of their customer base as women make major purchasing decisions as consumers. Indeed, in the European Union, women make up ever greater numbers of senior leaders in a range of professions including government, parliaments, the law, and medicine and science, although these vary according to member state. For example in 2015, 44% of seats in the Swedish Parliament were held by women, whereas in Hungary, just 10% of seats in the National Assembly were held by women. In Europe, the percentage of women on boards in the largest companies varied from 38.9% in Norway to just 5.2% in Portugal (The World Bank 2015). Within this ranking, the UK had the fifth highest percentage of women on 'top' boards in Europe and the world.

While these figures show an improving picture in the West, we argue that women are still not contributing fully enough to the executive communities that determine professional and business policies and practices. This exclusion of the 'female voice' is a serious matter because there are tangible and measurable consequences for business communities, not least in terms of the quality and effectiveness of leadership performance.

In the next section, we review the three principal ways in which research on gender, language and leadership has been conducted in order to locate this book's studies within them.

Western Research

The field of gender, language and leadership has been conceptualised from three, broadly chronological theoretical perspectives. The first is the idea that leadership is a masculine construct; the second is that women and men use

language differently to conduct leadership; and the third is the discursive view that leaders are constructed as gendered through the frames of language and discourse. All three perspectives provide interesting ways of explaining why the use of language might act as a barrier to women seeking senior leadership positions, although we consider the third to be the most pertinent to an understanding of how women perform leadership in masculinised contexts.

The first perspective – that leadership is constructed as masculine – is both acknowledged and keenly critiqued by western research. According to this perspective, the prevailing stereotype of leadership is one that assumes that an 'effective' leader is authoritative, assertive, adversarial, competitive, task-focused, goal-orientated, and single-minded (Kanter 1993; Olsson 2006; Still 2006). As women leaders rarely fit this stereotype, they are marked as 'the other', a deviation from the male norm, and therefore viewed as less professional and competent. Holmes (2006) argues that women leaders are subjected to the 'double bind' whereby they are seen as too 'masculine' if they are considered to speak too assertively, or too 'feminine' if they are considered to speak too tentatively. In short, women cannot 'win' as leaders in the workplace.

The second perspective – that women and men use language differently to conduct leadership – is viewed as a less 'critical' and more liberal theorisation of women's role in the workplace than the first perspective. According to Vinnicombe and Singh (2002), men prefer to use transactional or goal-orientated styles of leadership, whereas women prefer to use 'transformational' or people-orientated leadership styles. Helgesen (1990) proposes that differently gendered leadership styles are a *strength* in the workplace, enabling both women and men to contribute complementary leadership skill-sets. She also claims that women leaders' supposed preference for a transformational style actually gives them a 'female advantage' over men because, as Eagly and Carli (2007: 810) suggest, 'effective leadership is congruent with the ways in which women lead'.

Other scholars have since criticised the idea that women leaders have an advantage as this has often *not* benefited senior women in male-dominated environments. This is because women and men tend to be evaluated differently and unequally for using the same leadership skill set. Fletcher (1999: 89) suggests that because 'relational practice' is more commonly associated with women than men at work, 'masculinist' organisations have traditionally ignored and devalued 'people skills', rendering the women who use them into 'disappearing acts'. However Fletcher also proposes the more positive view that relational practice can be transformed into

a set of linguistic resources for leadership, or in her words, a force for 'empowering others and creating allies' (1999: 123).

The third, discursive perspective – that leaders are constructed as gendered through the frames of language and discourse – challenges the notion of differently gendered leadership 'styles' (e.g. Baxter 2010; Cameron 2006; Ford 2007; Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Koller 2004; Mullany 2007; Schnurr 2009; Wodak 1997). As we have discussed above, this perspective contests the idea of a dichotomous binary relation between men and women, suggesting that actions are gendered, not people. Holmes (2006) argues that 'effective' leaders, either male or female, are able to draw expertly on a repertoire of 'interactional strategies' stereotypically coded both 'masculine' and 'feminine'. However this is not entirely a free choice; leaders are also positioned by whether they work in a normatively masculine or feminine CofP (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1998). Holmes' (2006) concept of a leadership linguistic repertoire is endorsed by Mullany (2007), who found various examples in her studies of meetings in which male leaders used relational language in more 'feminine' CofPs such as Human Resources departments, and female leaders used transactional language in more 'masculine' CofPs such as Operations departments. Both Baxter (2010) and Mullany (2007) further argue that theorists who utilise discursive approaches should take greater account of the way micro-level interactional strategies index macro-level practices within CofPs. Such macro-practices take the form of 'gendered discourses' that govern assumptions about how women and men should speak and behave such as a discourse of 'masculinisation' or of 'equal opportunities'.

Whole corporations can be gendered from top to bottom with discourses determining the way their people speak, interact and behave, according to Baxter (2010). In line with the three theories above, she identifies three types of gendered organisation: the first is the 'male-dominated corporation' in which men are seen as the 'natural born leaders' and women their willing subordinates. The second is the 'gender-divided corporation' where women and men take up classically gendered, polarised roles (e.g. men dominate at senior level, and women at middle and lower management levels; men perform the 'hard' roles such as operations and finance, and women the 'soft' roles such as human resources and corporate social responsibility). The third is the 'gender-multiple corporation', mostly a state to which companies aspire, where gender is of less consequence as a tool of business organisation, and women and men are to be found at all levels in multiple roles across the institution.

Aims of the Book

In light of our review of both Middle Eastern and western research literature above, we have formulated several aims for this book. First, we wish to learn more about how senior women actually perform leadership within Bahraini and UK corporate contexts. We ask: 'What versions of leadership in business life do senior women perform?' and 'What does leadership "look and sound like" for each women leader within her given CofP?' Secondly, we ask 'What influence, if any, "working in a Bahraini company" or "working in a UK company" might have in relation to women's performance of leadership within the CofP of their team meetings?' To answer this, we consider how corporate and gendered discourses in their particular CofPs interact with each leader's performance of leadership. This question leads us to identify the range of discourses circulating within each leader's team meetings, and to explore how each leader positions themselves or are positioned *by* these discourses. Thirdly, we ask whether it is possible to define what constitutes an 'effective' leader within and across different sociocultural leadership contexts, and whether businesses can learn from our insights. Finally, we consider whether the positioning of women leaders by gendered discourses in large companies is a reason why they still find it difficult to progress to senior positions. If so, what insights can scholars and practitioners contribute to bring about change?

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The Bahraini and UK Research Studies

Abstract This chapter explains how the Bahraini and UK research studies were conducted in terms of their use of case study method. Each research study comprises three case studies focusing upon a woman leader conducting a senior management meeting with her team over several hours. The authors explain the aims, research design, participants, methods of data collection, transcription, ethics, and methods of data analysis involved in the studies. All case studies were conducted in almost identical ways involving semi-ethnographic approaches to data collection. The chapter also explains the key concepts of Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA), such as power, subject positioning, and discourses. The studies use denotative analysis to micro-analyse the linguistic data, and connotative analysis to identify corporate and gendered discourses shaping the spoken interactions of each of the six leaders.

Keywords Case study • Qualitative research • Ethnography • Corporate meetings • Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes how we conducted two separate research studies in our respective countries (Al A'ali in Bahrain; Baxter in the UK), yet our aims, philosophy and many elements of the research design and delivery

were very similar. The reason for our harmony is that, as colleagues, we have worked together on related research themes for a number of years, and continue to share a strong interest in developing feminist poststructuralist methods of studying women's leadership that are principled, flexible and 'fit for purpose'. In this chapter, we explain how we conducted our two studies, outlining the similarities and overlaps in our approaches, as well as the ways in which we differed and diverged. We first present the common theoretical and methodological principles and design of the research; we follow this with information about the two research settings, and then explain our use of Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) to analyse the performances of women leaders in senior management meetings, and to fulfil our research aims (see p. 41 below).

Shared Features of the Two Studies

Common to both the Bahraini and UK studies are the following elements: a feminist poststructuralist perspective, a semi-ethnographic research design, a multiple case study approach (Yin 2009), qualitative research methods of data collection, the use of corporate meetings as our principal site of investigation, and a self-reflexive attitude towards the study of discursive interactions. As specified in Chap. 1, our research is founded on the premise that leadership is comprised of discursive practices in action (Holmes and Marra 2004). We hold the view that context is 'potentially infinite' and that 'a strictly top down, externally imposed, static understanding of context would not be able to effectively account for the shifts and dynamisms of meeting events' (Handford 2010: 26). Thus our methodological goal is to acquire a participant observer's knowledge of context, and to gain a deeper understanding of leadership experience both from our own point of view but also from that of the participants. One strongly favoured means of achieving this within the field of gender, language and leadership is by utilising an ethnographic approach.

An Ethnographic Approach

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 1), researchers should immerse themselves in the context through participating 'overtly or covertly' in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the

focus of the research. However, this 'extended period of time' is quite a demand; very few researchers actually manage to experience the lives of the individuals they observe in an anthropological sense (Swann and Maybin 2008). Also, the use of 'covert' methods is no longer condoned by the majority of universities worldwide, as participants are rightly entitled to a full account of the aims and scope of a research study. As sociolinguists who were both granted relatively limited access to the field sites (various private companies), we were unable to participate extensively in the research settings. Given these constraints, we adopt a *semi-ethnographic* perspective by which we mean using methods of data collection compatible with participant observation such as 'being there', observing meetings, making field notes and conducting interviews. A core objective of ethnography is to gain 'thick descriptions' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 10), in our case, of all the contextual factors shaping the professional identities of the women leaders in their CofPs. For this purpose, we incorporate our semi-ethnographic approach with a case study design.

Case Study Design

Researchers principally use qualitative case studies when they are enquiring about the 'what' and 'how' of real-life phenomena. Case studies tend to concentrate attention on the way individuals or groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation (Yin 2009). While researchers have focused on different aspects of case studies defining them in various ways (e.g. heuristic, interpretative, evaluative, theory building, etc.), we chose a case study approach in the first instance for *descriptive* reasons: that is, to capture and illustrate the complexity, detail and multi-faceted nature of how women actually use language to *perform* leadership. Mabry (2008) argues that qualitative case studies cannot be generalised to an entire population; they are often localised and utilised to provide rich and detailed descriptions of the participants and a deep understanding of the diversity of any given context. However, case studies are often also *heuristic*: they describe the phenomenon thoroughly to the reader by recording not only the 'what' and 'how', but also the 'why' of the situation, providing space for evaluation and critique. Thus, the functions of case studies as both descriptive *and* heuristic were part of the appeal in the design of our research methodology.

   With regards to design, both of us chose to conduct multiple case studies of individual women leaders in their separate professional contexts.

While Baxter conducted three case studies of women from different UK companies, Al A'ali conducted three case studies within the same Bahraini company. Yin (2009) notes that 'case study' can be single or multiple, but that multiple case studies are almost always stronger than single ones. In multiple case studies, a researcher often gathers data from a number of sub-cases separately, and then conducts analysis across the cases, which in fact we chose to do in our research, and we explicate this further in 'Design of the Two Studies', on p. 36 below.

Qualitative Research Methods

The use of diverse methods is another important principle in case study research. Yin (2009: 17) states that case studies are used with 'distinctive situations in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, as one result relies on diverse sources of evidence'. Although case study generally allows for any number or type of data collection and analysis methods, case study research that seeks to explore and gain insights into a certain context often relies on qualitative methods such as observation, interviews, shadowing and document analysis. From a modernist perspective, this diversity of methods conventionally allows for reassurance about the *validity* of the data collected and hence, the insights derived. According to Aguinaldo (2004), modernism views knowledge as one definable truth or one objective social reality, and so modernist research seeks to identify a clear truth or 'reality' in the social world. Where two or more data sources tend to support and complement each other, this represents a 'triangulation' of the data whereby each method confirms the trustworthiness or credibility of the other methods.

However, the concept of validity in social research has changed dramatically with the advent of poststructuralist epistemologies. As we have outlined in Chap. 1, a poststructuralist perspective perceives knowledge as discursively constructed, and thus, research findings are viewed as representations or *versions* of reality: that is, partial, situated and constituted through language. Rather than using each data source to check and confirm the 'truthfulness' of the other data sources, each source is seen as a valid reading in its own right, which serves to *supplement*, *challenge* or *subvert* the other data sources. Where contrasting findings or interpretations emerge from each data source in our own study, we seek to do justice to those alternative readings. For example, we show that individual research participants may interpret the same data in diverging ways, or that the different theoretical and methodological lenses we apply to the data produce contrasting insights.

We therefore support Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009: 19) view that the concept of validity should be treated as 'an expression of craftsmanship, with an emphasis on quality of research by checking, questioning, and theorizing on the nature of the phenomena investigated'. We aim to be highly reflexive and sensitive to our own prejudices and subjectivities. Reflexivity, now commonly used in social science research, refers to the acknowledgment and awareness of the effect of the researchers' own subjectivities, prejudices, uncertainties and cultural inclinations towards the research process. Reflexivity is based on the assumption that theory building is a culturally embedded social activity, and since researchers are an inherent part of the social world, their research is, to a large extent, a representation of their *view* of the world: a version of reality among many competing versions. In that regard, Denzin (1994: 503) notes '[R]epresentation … is always self-presentation … the other's presence is directly connected to the writer's self-presence in the text'. We follow Denzin's view that it is important to reflect upon our choice of context, participants, methods of data collection, data analysis, presentation of research findings, and so on, and this is very much part of the theoretical and methodological approach of this book.

Corporate Meetings

For both of us, the decision to observe women leaders in *corporate meetings* lies in the latter's significance as 'one of the most important and visible sites of organisational power' (Mumby 1998: 68). Meetings are where business gets done, and business is conducted through communication. Boden (1994: 8) asserts that talk, especially talk in meetings, is 'the lifeblood of organizations'. Of course there are many other media by which leadership is accomplished and much business activity today is conducted online by means of emails, texts, video conferencing, and so forth (Darics 2015). However, the face-to-face business meeting remains a key site for important activities in organisations, such as making announcements, problem-solving, decision-making and negotiation. While talk in meetings usually revolves around transactional objectives of the organisation, it also features a significant amount of relational exchange. Boden (1994: 84) defines a corporate meeting as a 'planned gathering' (internal or external to the organisation), which has 'some purpose or reason, a time, a place, in some general sense, an organizational function'. Also, participants usually have allocated roles and some type of 'forewarning of the event'.

A corporate business meeting can be regarded as a CofP in its own right (Holmes and Stubbe 2003). A meeting matches Lave and Wenger's (1991) criteria for a CofP in that it involves mutual engagement (a team that meets regularly), a jointly negotiated enterprise (based on a collective agenda), and a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time (such as the employment of a personal assistant who takes minutes, or the exchange of a set of in-jokes that serves to cement team relationships). According to Holmes and Stubbe (2003), meetings may well differ in the 'practice' and endeavour of the participants. They can be forward-oriented (e.g. planning, prospective meetings), backward-oriented (e.g. reporting, retrospective meetings), or present-oriented (e.g. task oriented, problem-solving meetings). Additionally, meetings in organisations can be formal or informal. Formal meetings are usually more structured events, with a nominated Chair, designated place, and fixed agenda. In contrast, informal meetings are more spontaneous, loosely conducted, and often take place in the Chair's office (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997). The meetings featured in the case studies (see Chaps. 3, 4 and 5) range along this cline between relative formality and informality, but all of them were based on an agenda with a nominated Chair.

Furthermore, business meetings internationally comprise a number of generic elements according to Handford (2010): a set of participants, an agenda or topic, a purpose or goal, turn-taking modes, recognisable beginnings and endings, degrees of 'intertextuality' (participants making references to other meetings, events or texts), and influence upon practices of institutional, professional and/or national culture. This is a point on which the meetings in the Bahraini and UK contexts may differ to a degree, despite their being conducted within international companies and therefore having generic features in common. For example, Weir (2003) notes that meetings in the Arab Middle East are often conducted according to a different set of norms and worldviews than those in the west. For example, meetings tend to be flexible and loosely structured because of Arabs' sense of the synchronous rather than monochronous concept of time. He further explains that 'more than one event or type of event can take place in parallel, so a meeting, apparently on one topic, can transmute into another type of encounter, and back again, be curtailed or postponed without stated objectives apparently attained, without any offence being intended' (Weir 2003: 10). We will comment on such features when and where they occur within both contexts.

Our Methods in Use

We each applied a similar combination of methods in each study: observation, field notes, audio-recording and interview. Consistent with an ethnographic approach, our primary method of investigation was *participant observation*. Duranti (1997: 99) distinguishes between types of observation, ranging from 'passive participation' to 'complete observation'. He warns researchers against taking a complete participant's role because it distracts them from their main task and inquiry. Instead, Duranti (1997: 101) recommends that researchers should take the role of a 'professional over-hearer': attending but not actively participating. In both our studies, this mainly took the form of being a 'passive' observer by sitting to one side of a management meeting, although the degree of participation in each meeting varied. We were generally expected to introduce ourselves, explain the purpose of the research (even though this had been described in writing as part of the process of ethical consent), state our roles as researchers, and participate in small talk at the beginning and end of meetings. On a couple of occasions, Baxter was asked to report back her impressions of what she had 'found out' at the end of the meeting, and she learnt to be very positive and diplomatic at this stage!

During the course of the meetings, we both made field notes on a range of contextual and paralinguistic features such as body language, prosody and seating arrangements. One established drawback to the process of observing and recording meetings that we both experienced is the so-called 'observer's paradox' (Labov 1972), which presumes that the observer may constrain and alter the behaviour and language of people being observed. Handford (2010: 5) argues that despite these constraints, 'it is necessary for the researcher to systematically observe the unfolding discourse in order to understand it'. He further claims that participants in business meetings are often so occupied with the goal-driven institutional discourse that they become oblivious to the existence of the observer. This was certainly our own experience; we found that our participants were very aware of our presence at the start of meetings but that they quickly seemed to forget that we were there.

We followed up our observation of meetings with one-to-one *interviews* with the women leaders and several of their colleagues, which allowed us to elicit participants' perceptions of how their leaders had performed in order to achieve the meeting's stated business objectives.

We chose to use interviews because they are an appropriate way of capturing participants' perceptions of their own leadership language and the language used by others. Interview data also offer valuable insights into participants' evaluations of themselves and others, evidence of the operating discourses in the context, as well as the norms of the CofPs in each case study. Within the poststructuralist paradigm, interviews are viewed as discursive events where talk is co-constructed and collaboratively produced between the interviewer and the interviewees (Talmy 2011). Based on this perspective, joint talk is perceived as reflective of the two parties' experiences, emotions, and knowledge, as well as the wider discourses in their cultures and the shared context of the interview. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 156) suggest that the researcher should consider interview data as revelatory of 'the perspectives and discursive practices of those who produced them'.

Reflexively, we needed to examine our own roles in constructing the realities, identities, and discourses produced within the interview context. In addition, we needed to decide on the type of interview we conducted, such as whether it would be structured, unstructured, semi-structured, biographical, collaborative, informal, open-ended, reflexive, and so on. In both our studies, we used semi-structured, open-ended interviews in order to encourage the participants to 'take the floor' and express their own understanding of the experience and performance of leadership, as well as the motives behind their own language choices, without imposing certain ideas or prompting their answers. To achieve this purpose, we used a combination of closed questions to glean initial factual information, and open questions to elicit wider views and opinions. For example, we avoided 'putting words into the mouths' of interviewees, and the word 'gender' was not mentioned, unless participants brought it up. During certain interviews, we found that we needed to discuss and negotiate our meanings and understandings as academics with their meanings as business people. For example, a word like 'transactional' makes sense to scholars of leadership, but business people are more likely to respond to a term such as 'operational'. This occasionally meant giving examples from our professional lives and scholarship to elicit richer, more open responses. We use interview data lightly in this book because of issues of confidentiality in the companies, but the interviews were of great value to the practitioners, the leaders themselves because it gave them a chance to reflect on the meetings (see Chap. 5).

Ethics and Consent

In most businesses worldwide, it is not possible to conduct academic research without the provision of 'informed consent' – that is, participants' right to know that they are being researched, the overall purpose and process of the research, the main features of the project design, any possible risks or benefits from participating in the research, the outcomes and findings of the study, and the right to withdraw at any time. As members of the same British university at the time, Al A'ali and Baxter both followed the guidelines required by its ethics committee, whereby all participants in the study were fully informed about the study, assured that the data would be treated confidentially, and consequently were asked to sign individual or collective letters of consent. However this was not simply a one-way transaction; many of the companies involved also asked us to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), as we were gaining access to highly confidential and sensitive leadership contexts. Indeed, in the UK cases, Baxter often heard information in meetings that was 'hot off the press' and which appeared in international news media soon after.

Given that senior leaders are often reluctant for researchers to observe them in confidential settings, and that they were unwilling for interview data to be cited in the public domain, negotiating access to each company was a lengthy process that presented obstacles from the beginning. In Baxter's case, at least six months were taken up negotiating access with ten companies. In Al A'ali's case, had it not been for a connection with an insider in the company, and this person's influence and pressure on top management personnel, it would have been almost impossible to get any access to data sources. Upon receiving a general approval letter from the company's management allowing her to conduct research there, Al A'ali contacted a number of senior women individually and arranged for preliminary meetings where she could explain the purpose and process of her research, hoping to leave a good impression and encourage them to participate in the study. By the end of the year, she had managed to obtain the personal approval of three senior women to attend and record one meeting, and conduct and record interviews with them and a number of their staff. However, throughout the research process, she found that she occasionally needed to renegotiate access as well as explain her position as a researcher in the meetings. In one meeting, some participants were suspicious at first and asked numerous questions about the nature of the

study and how she would use the information she gained in the meeting. This was despite her repeated reassurances about the ethical code of consent with its strict use of anonymity and confidentiality. Gaining access to leadership contexts, especially in the Middle East, was arguably the greatest challenge in Al A'ali's research.

Design of the Two Studies

The Bahrainco Study

For this study, Al A'ali observed three senior women leading their teams within a single, national, public-sector company, Bahrainco (a pseudonym). This company is a fairly large company in Bahrain, and has been in operation for over 80 years. From personal experience, Al A'ali knows Bahrainco for its unique organisational culture with a combination of Middle Eastern and western influences. From this experience, Al A'ali deemed it a 'male-dominated organisation' (Baxter 2010: 23), with a strong patriarchal culture (where men hold most, if not all, high-ranking, decision-making positions). Consequently, women have always held subordinate roles rather than senior ones. Recently, in order to support the Bahraini government's plan to empower women. Bahrainco appointed two women as managers of sections and a number of other women were given supervisory positions. This is apparently part of the company's bigger plan towards providing equal opportunities to all employees.

Al A'ali used qualitative methods in order to gather a rich and detailed picture of the subjects of her three case studies: Badria (a manager in the Business and Planning Department); Hanan (a senior support engineer in the Engineering Division); and Fatima (a senior employee in the HR department), (all pseudonyms). Her ethnographic approach to the research design involved spending time at the research sites, extensive observation, taking field notes and conducting interviews with participants. Each meeting was around one to three hours in length. The diversity of the participants and the type of language used in the Bahrainco meetings posed some challenges in terms of transcription and analysis. First, owing to the presence of non-Arabic speaking participants, English was predominantly used as the medium of communication in Badria and Hanan's meetings. However, instances of code-switching to Arabic were noted between the Arabic-speaking participants. In contrast Fatima's meeting comprised all Arabic Bahraini speakers; thus, the language of the meeting was predominantly Arabic. For this

case, Al A'ali used her knowledge of the Arabic language and the linguistic context to produce her translation of the transcript. She accepts that she is not an expert in translation, nor a professional translator, and chose to use Baker's (1992) concepts of 'equivalence' and 'non-equivalence' to help her. Equivalence does not necessarily mean sameness, for languages differ greatly in many aspects. Baker (1992) suggests that the problems of 'non-equivalence' between languages and how this might affect translation include the following:

- cultural-specific concepts in the source language which are non-existent in and therefore untranslatable to the target language
- source language concepts that are not lexicalised in the target language; in this case the notion may exist in the culture but there are no allocated wordings to express it.
- differences in form where there are certain features and language structures in the source language (e.g. suffixes, prefixes, etc.) which do not exist in the target language.

Al A'ali utilised a number of strategies to overcome these problems such as: paraphrasing or providing a more general word or concept; substituting with a word that has the same impact in the target culture, and using a loan word with explanation (especially with culture-specific items or modern concepts). When working with data from Fatima's case study, Al A'ali found this case particularly challenging because the leader uses religious embedded phrases in her speech, along with Arabic expressions and colloquial language which do not have equivalent counterparts in English. In these particular instances, Al A'ali consulted with translators and linguists from Bahrain, as well as family and friends, to ensure that the meanings she provided were, to a great extent, accurate (for the approach to transcription, see Appendix 1).

In Badria's and Hanan's cases, translation was not a major issue because the meetings were conducted in English. Yet, Badria and Hanan code-switched to Arabic in certain places in the meeting with certain participants. We use the term 'code-switching' to refer to speakers' alternation of their use of the linguistic resources of Arabic and English. These instances are signalled and translated, and the motives behind the code-switching are discussed in Chap. 3. There are clearly many contextual reasons that prompt Arabic speakers of English to code-switch; in many cases, certain concepts or words are more available to speakers in one language or the

other (Moreno et al. 2002). Code-switching can also be used by speakers who share a similar background or community to affirm group identity (Gardner-Chloros 2009). A recent study by Harmaini (2014) found that in intercultural settings, Muslim speakers (both Arab and non-Arab) often code-switch to Arabic with certain formulaic phrases such as 'Subhana Allah' [Halleluiah], 'Alhamdulillah' [Praise be to God], 'Jazak Allah' [May God reward you] and 'Inshashallah' [God wills] to indicate religious identity. Other reported reasons are: lack of vocabulary or lexical resources; drawing attention to particular addressees or excluding others in a conversation (Reyes 2004). Al A'ali found several of these reasons to be relevant to the code-switching instances in her research, especially in Fatima's case study where she code-switches with a male colleague, Amal, in a seemingly private conversation during the course of the meeting (see Chap. 3).

The UK Study

For the British study, the three cases were selected from a larger research project involving ten leading private and public sector companies, both national and international, from a range of business sectors including retailing, logistics, transport, insurance and engineering. This larger study was seeking comparative data of the UK leadership practices used by both senior men and women to lead senior management meetings across different sectors. This book selects three cases from the ten women leaders studied overall: Anna, a senior engineer with an academic background who has a managing director (MD) role in a large, international engineering company based in London, UK; Julie, a board director of a human resources (HR) department in a large, national transportation company; and Nicola, an MD in a large, national logistics company in the UK. All three companies recruited international employees to their management teams and it was common to find English-speaking directors in the meetings who were from all parts of the European Union, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand among other places. These three cases were selected from the ten because they seemed to deploy widely ranging leadership practices within different communities of practice. Baxter felt it was important to reflect the range and diversity of UK women's leadership practices, and to explore what can be learnt from the three leaders' varying approaches. Furthermore, she has not previously published work on Anna and Nicola's cases, but please see Baxter (2014) for Julie's case, which focuses on this leader's use of 'double-voicing'.

Like Al A'ali, Baxter's ethnographic approach to the research design involved spending time at the research sites, extensive observation, taking field notes and conducting interviews with participants. Baxter was permitted to observe just one meeting for each leader in her case studies because access was highly restricted. The length of meetings varied from leader to leader: while Anna's meeting lasted just three hours, both Julie's and Nicola's meetings lasted all day. Further details are given in Chap. 4.

We now move on to review how we analysed the meeting and interview transcript data with the use of the FPDA methodology. We first consider its guiding principles, then how we turned these principles into an analytical framework.

Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA)

FPDA combines the principles and practices of poststructuralism with a feminist focus in order to address specific, contextualised gender issues (see Chap. 1). FPDA is concerned to uncover the ways in which women are positioned by gendered and other corporate discourses, which may deny them a voice or marginalise their role in social and professional life. The methodology analyses the ways in which speakers shift between subject positions of 'powerfulness' and 'powerlessness' during influential interactions like management meetings (Baxter 2003: 8). The phrase 'powerful positioning' refers to a speaker who is better placed than others to benefit from, and activate, the interests, knowledge and goals of a particular context by virtue of their more privileged positioning within a range of institutional discourses (see Chap. 5). Clearly, a 'powerless positioning' implies the opposite of this, with a range of positions in between. FPDA also examines how speakers are never static in their discursive status, but constantly *shift* in their positioning between different discourses within a speech context. Thus, a woman leader may shift in and out of positions of power from one moment to the next, depending on how strongly she is positioned overall by the prevailing discourses. For example, she may be powerfully positioned within a discourse of 'hierarchy and status' as a member of her company's executive committee, but she may be powerlessly positioned as a woman within a discourse of 'masculinisation' (Baxter 2003: 146). FPDA not only explores how individual speakers constantly vary in their experience of power but what the social and professional

implications of their shifting discursive positioning might be in terms of (for example) their possible 'effectiveness' as leaders.

FPDA has the following principles that guide the linguistic and discursive analysis of spoken interactions (Baxter 2003, 2010).

1. *Synchronic and diachronic dimensions to analysis*: the 'synchronic' dimension involves identifying significant moments in linguistic interactions where a speaker *shifts* between different positions of power, which are indexed by micro-linguistic evidence in transcripts (Gumperz 1982). The 'diachronic' dimension analyses the language of individuals as they interact over time, and ascertains the norms and practices of the CofPs to which they belong. This is often achieved by using ethnographic alongside discourse analytical methods. While the focus of FPDA is upon micro-analysis of 'the significant moment' in transcripts, data can be supported by longer-term observations in the form of field notes, documentary analysis and interview.

2. *Denotative to connotative analysis*: denotative analysis supports the synchronic dimension by conducting detailed, micro-linguistic analysis of significant moments within interactions. To achieve this, FPDA borrows from established methods such as Interactional Sociolinguistic Analysis (ISA) or Conversation Analysis (CA) (Cameron 2001), both of which aim to describe 'what is going on within this interaction'. On the basis of the micro-linguistic evidence, connotative analysis seeks to identify evidence of macro-level discourses within and across interactions (Sunderland 2004).

3. *Intertextuality:* this involves the analysis of interwoven and at times, competing discourses, and how these work to position speakers as powerful, powerless, or somewhere in between, within interactions. Discourses rarely operate on their own to position participants, but rather they double- or treble-up to position participants in complex, ever shifting ways. For example, a discourse of hierarchy and status, if intertextualised with a discourse of masculinisation, might position women as unsuitable for senior leadership because they do not fit the 'male as norm' expectation (Baxter 2003). Because discourses are fluid, they provide gaps and spaces in the interactions for participants to contest dominant ways of seeing the world, and at times to overturn them (Sunderland 2004: 28). FPDA gives space for those moments of transformation to emerge through the analysis.

4. *Supplementarity*: FPDA can supplement other methods and approaches to discourse analysis such as ISA or CA in order to bring plural and expedient perspectives on spoken interaction. FPDA does not tend to stand on its own as an all-encompassing approach, as it seeks a diversity of perspectives and insights on the topic. Data are therefore analysed through different 'lenses', in order to release multiple readings.
5. *Practical outcomes:* research ideally addresses a social problem or issue within a particular local context, and the analysis aims to produce insights and outcomes that can be of real, functional value to researchers and practitioners.

How We Use FPDA in this Book

The five principles above are interwoven throughout our methodology and are not easily distinguishable. In relation to the first principle, the 'diachronic dimension' is reflected in our use of semi-ethnographic methods to observe the lived experience of our six participants within their leadership contexts (as we explain above). The synchronic dimension is observable in our decision to use ISA as a means of identifying 'significant moments' in the interaction through micro-analysis of the selected transcripts.

The second principle of using denotative analysis to connotative analysis as a basis for identifying macro-level discourses, is at the core of our approach and needs a more detailed explanation. First, at the denotative level, ISA helps us to analyse how participants speak and interact by looking closely at lexical and grammatical features, metaphor, turn-taking, prosody and paralanguage. These features provide information about speakers by means of 'contextualisation cues' (Gumperz 1982), which index locally enacted aspects of macro-social identities such as gender, class, ethnicity or status. In order to identify whether practices in our data are *gendered*, we supplemented our use of ISA with Och's (1992) model of indexicality, whereby we asked whether and how gender might play a part in shaping the performance of leadership by participants. Ochs and later, Mullany (2007: 31) argue that there are very few forms that *directly* index gender, but that linguistic strategies 'should be seen as being indirectly indexed with gender'. There are linguistic norms for women and men, which McElhinney (2003: 35) argues are maintained by 'linguistic and cultural-ideological expectations about femininity' that influence our

language preferences when interacting. We are further guided by Och's comment that 'linguistic features (stances, social acts, social activities)…. index gendered meanings' (Ochs 1992: 341).

We conclude the denotative stage by analysing each of the two studies through the 'supplementary' lens of the 'leadership linguistic repertoire' (Holmes 2006; Marra et al. 2006); see the fourth principle above). We use this lens to generate insights on what leadership 'looks and sounds like' for women leaders in the Bahrainco and UK senior meeting contexts. The 'leadership linguistic repertoire' is a model based on the premise that effective leaders draw on a wide repertoire of interactional strategies to achieve their professional goals ranging from very 'masculine' to very 'feminine'. This model posits that effective leaders can select appropriate strategies from the repertoire according to the type of CofP in which they live and work. So, if a CofP is normatively masculine, the leader is more likely to gravitate towards the use of masculinised strategies regardless of their gender. Rather than describing the leadership styles of *participants* as gendered, Holmes (2006) describes the *CofP* as gendered, which influences the linguistic and discursive practices that are used. Thus, a leadership team that uses predominantly relational practices such as an egalitarian philosophy, a collaborative style and a motivational manner towards each other are more likely to match the normatively feminine end of the leadership linguistic spectrum. Whereas a team that displays predominantly transactional practices such as a 'can-do', results-based philosophy, a competitive style and a confrontational manner towards each other are more likely to match the masculine end of the spectrum. The 'repertoire' lens provides us with a conceptual tool for understanding the performance of women's leadership that can supplement our use of FPDA.

The denotative analysis stage is also the key evidential platform for conducting the *connotative* analysis of the two studies. In Chap. 5, we start by identifying the range of corporate and gendered discourses that circulate within each of the six case studies. As Sunderland (2004: 7) argues, the identification and naming of discourses is a contentious business, and she proposes that scholars look for 'linguistic traces' which can be found by analysing a range of features such as the following:

- *Non-verbal language*: such as eye contact, gestures, seating positions, in order to observe moments of (dis)comfort, tension, release or resistance that may be at odds with the verbal language, and signal moments of power or loss of power

- *Verbal language:* such as constantly repeated keywords and phrases that may index interest, focus, concern or importance to the participants
- *Metaphors*: one-off and extended, that signal emotional, visceral or sub-textual messages which might encapsulate the 'mood' or spirit of a discourse
- *Metalanguage:* the language used by participants to describe their speech, behaviour and relationships, also to emphasise interest, focus, concern or importance to the participants.

Reflexively, our use of an approach that infers the existence of macro-level discourses from micro-level linguistic interactions is always interpretive, provisional and a result of scholarly co-construction. However, FPDA should enable us to identify the separate and the intertextualised discourses that variously position Bahraini and UK women as they perform leadership (see principle 3 above). Once identified, the connotative analysis will focus on interpreting how the various discourses interact to position speakers in ever shifting positions of power. The connotative-level analysis should offer fresh descriptions and explanations of how and why the women in our case studies construct leadership in the way they do.

Finally, the use of FPDA at both the denotative and connotative levels relies on the selection of particular transcripts for analysis. It is important to justify why we have chosen the extracts we have, as otherwise transcripts can appear simply to serve the anticipated outcomes of the researchers. We opted for a 'judgement' rather than a 'random' selection of extracts (Mesthrie 2000) because, within the qualitative case study paradigm, we wished to generate richness of insights rather than look for typicality upon which generalisations can be made. Thus, we chose sequences of linguistic interaction that on first impression appeared interesting or distinctive, and on second impression, offered a heightened sense of the overall character of the interaction. Extracts also represent moments where there is evidence of participants rapidly shifting between subject positions of power and powerlessness. While Cameron (2001) claims that a discourse analyst is entitled to select *any* extract because they are capable of finding such an extract interesting, there are sequences where the exchange becomes more intense, engaged and focused. These sequences capture significant moments such as when decisions are being made, agreements being reached, points of conflict and tension being escalated or resolved, which then trigger shifts of subject positioning among members of a management team.

In a short book such as this one, it is these intense, 'action-packed' extracts that we have chosen to analyse in the following chapters, although we fully accept that the ordinariness of much interaction is also of great value to the analyst.

Assessing the 'Effectiveness' of Women Leaders

Scholars of gender, language and leadership do not usually assess the 'effectiveness' of a leader's language or interactional strategies for achieving certain purposes. Linguists of all stamps have a preference for *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive* approaches to linguistic scholarship, which Cook (2003: 15) explains as:

> all variants [of language being] equally valid simply by virtue of the fact that they occur, and that no one form is any more or less correct than another… As in the natural sciences, the task is not to evaluate but to describe and explain.

Description is valuable to the linguist because it avoids the need to make explicit judgements based on subjective, culturally-specific or untested criteria. Currently however, there is a strong move for applied linguists to work with practitioners (such as business leaders) to address 'real' linguistic problems (e.g. Holmes and Vine (in press)). In these settings, research participants and practitioners expect answers and solutions to the problems they identify with researchers. Indeed, we argue that we *should* be able to provide answers to their questions. This is why the book aims to understand what constitutes an 'effective' leader in different sociocultural leadership contexts, and asks whether business leaders can learn from our insights. It is no longer sufficient simply to describe how leaders perform their roles linguistically; we also need to provide *feedback* to our participants about leadership linguistic performance, indicating what we consider works well, and what less so, in their meetings, and *why* we think so. This perspective is not only consistent with an international research context that increasingly requires scholars to produce 'impact' upon research participants, it is also consistent with the fifth principle of FPDA, which places a strong emphasis on the practical outcomes of research.

Accordingly, the very methods we use to *collect* the data are the very methods we use to *assess* leadership linguistic 'effectiveness'. First, we consider what constitutes effectiveness according to Holmes's (2006) 'leadership

linguistic repertoire' approach, which has formed its own definitions of how 'skilfully' speakers are able to use strategies across its spectrum. Second, we consider what constitutes effectiveness according to the epistemological criteria of the two methods of discourse analysis utilised in this book. The use of ISA (Chaps. 3 and 4) will enable us to identify larger, sociocultural patterns in leadership speech and behaviour. This method can tell us whether (or not) the interactional practices of leaders index wider cultural norms and patterns of identity (such as gender), and the extent to which leaders are constrained by, or transcend, these indexed norms. We propose that a 'transcendence' of the norms might offer us a measure of a leader's effectiveness – for example, in their readiness to construct divergent versions of leadership. We also use FPDA to assess the relative 'powerfulness' of speakers as they shift their subject positioning between multiple and competing discourses. A speaker's powerful positioning across a combination of discourses might index their effectiveness as a leader in terms of (for example) their facility to influence decisions made in senior management meetings. Combining ISA with FPDA further helps to produce a multi-perspectival, analytical profile of each leader's use of language, from which criteria for evaluating effectiveness can emerge. We are using a diagnostic model rather than a participant model for assessing effectiveness; by this we mean that we will apply discourse analytical concepts such as Holmes's leadership linguistic repertoire, and FPDA's shifts in subject positions (see Chap. 6).

We now move on to present the three case studies of senior women chairing and leading management meetings in the company, Bahrainco.

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Women Leaders in Bahrain
by Haleema Al A'ali

Abstract This chapter presents three case studies of senior women chairing management meetings in the company, Bahrainco. These cases feature: Badria, a manager of the Business and Planning Department, who is working with members of an external consultancy, Multico, to organise a joint conference; Hanan, a senior engineer in the Engineering Department, who is working on a critical project with her team; and Fatima, a superintendent at middle manager level in the Human Resources (HR) Department, who is negotiating the possible redundancy of members of her team. The chapter uses FPDA to analyse each case in turn, and at the end of the chapter, makes a comparative analysis of the three case studies through the lens of Holmes' (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire model.

Keywords Meetings • Chairing • Leadership • Interactions • Linguistic repertoire

The overall purpose of this chapter is to produce a micro-analysis of the language of women leaders running business meetings in Bahrain. This will provide a basis of linguistic evidence upon which to offer a range of interpretations of the practices, subject positions and discourses available to Bahraini women leaders. The study takes place in Bahrainco, a company where women are in the minority, especially in managerial positions. In

fact, prior to the Supreme Council for Women's Empowerment Plan in 2001 (Metcalfe 2011), women did not serve in the company's board-room. Although the three case studies in this chapter are based in one company, each meeting took place in a different department, each distinct in its business function, and arguably constitutes a unique community of practice (CofP).

For the purpose of my research, I selected three women who, although distinct in their working environment, share many similar characteristics. They are all beneficiaries of the company's recent empowerment plans; they all have worked in the company for over 20 years and have recently been promoted to their positions following changes in the company's strategic plans to incorporate women in managerial positions. The women work in top and middle management in three different departments: Badria is a manager in the Business Planning Department; Hanan is a superintendent and a senior engineer in the Engineering Department, and Fatima is a superintendent (middle manager) in the Human Resources (HR) Department.

In this chapter, I discuss each case study individually and present background information about each manager. Additionally, I provide a brief review of the setting and the circumstances of the meetings and then conduct a denotative, micro-analysis of extracts from each leader's meetings. In the final section of the chapter, I use Holmes' (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire as a framework to assess what can be learnt about the three women's leadership practices in Bahrainco.

Badria's Case Study

At the time of the data collection, Badria was one of only two senior women in upper management, and the first woman to be appointed at senior management level in the history of Bahrainco. She had worked there all her professional life, and she had been managing the Business Planning Department since 2007. Data for this case study primarily consist of extracts from one hour and thirty minutes of transcribed data of a recorded meeting between Badria and seven other participants (five women and two men). This is one among a series of meetings that Badria chairs to organise a joint conference between Bahrainco and The University of Design (UOD), (both pseudonyms).

Bahrainco is a part of a larger organisation (pseudonym, SATCO), which is formally involved in the process of organising the conference. Participants from the three institutions attended a series of operational meetings. There are three key participants, all women: Badria (representing Bahrainco), Amal (a senior employee representing SATCO), and Dr Sara (a senior employee representing UOD). The other attendants are employees from Bahrainco and members of Badria's team: Omar (a public relations officer), Ameena (a public relations officer) and Sonia (a senior employee from another department). The participants' status in the meeting, including the three women, is relatively bound by the status of their institutions. For example, although Badria is the Chair, she is bound by Amal's views owing to the higher status of SATCO over Bahrainco. There is also a reference in the meeting to 'the Minister'. He is the Chairman of SATCO and Amal's direct superior and, hence, his authority presides over Badria's decisions as well.

Both Bahrainco and UOD have definite roles in this project. Bahrainco is the main sponsor and host, and UOD is the sole organiser of the conference. Badria's main job as Chair is to oversee and facilitate the organisation process. Dr Sara's main job is to organise the conference and sort out the logistics such as finding and communicating with other sponsors and keynote speakers, preparing the venue, designing the backdrop and the invitation cards, and above all, negotiating with Bahrainco before making any decisions. However, SATCO's role is slightly vague and appears to be based more on its hierarchical relationship with Bahrainco than on specific transactions. In the following two extracts, the participants are discussing the layout and design of the backdrop of the banners and invitation cards, particularly, the placement of the three organisational logos (SATCO, Bahrainco, and UOD). The first extract takes place a few minutes after the beginning of the meeting; after the introductions and recap, Dr Sara displays a draft design of the backdrop and draws the participants' attention to the logos of the three organisations, which are all positioned equally on the same level.

Extract 1: 'We are discussing it and we will tell you'

(B=Badria, Chair; A=Amal, SATCO representative, female; D=Dr Sara, UOD representative, female)

```
1 D:    so this is the backdrop (.) the main backdrop that we have (.)
2       this is fairly nice (.) and the logos can be made a little bigger
3       (.) but we have done the designing with er you know with the
```

```
4        screen is down [(--)
5 B:              [°when el-wazeer yia tedayaq ala el logo mal
6        SATCO° (.) khallanna nsheelah we-enhet el logo mal SATCO°(°the
7        minister attends he complained about SATCO's logo ° (.)°he made
8        us take it off and put the SATCO's logo°)(whispering to Amal)
9 A:     emm
10 B:    °fa ma'arf ala alaqal er° (°so I don't know at least er°)
11 A:    °ee ee (.) ehwa beyie ↑ (°yeah yeah (.) is he coming↑°)
12 B:    ° y:emken (.) ma'arf tarashna leh resalah fa ma'arf(°maybe(.)I
13       don't know we sent him a letter so I don't know°)
14 A:    ° ehwa bey-betkoon taht rea'aytah↑°(°is he coming- is it going to
15       be under his patronage↑°)
16 B:    °ehna katbeen enna tkoon taht rea'aytah° (° we are asking that it
17       is under his patronage°)
18       (Undecipherable talk between Badria, Amal and Sonia)
19 D:    tell us tell us please
20 B:    sorry↑
21 D:    tell us whatever that [(--)
22                            [(laughter from everyone)
23 B:    £we are discussing it and we will tell you£ er you know (.) SATCO
24       (.) is the mother company (.) OK↑
25 D:    OK
26 B:    usua[lly (.) we use SATCO (.) if you [see the (-) it is always
27 D:        [SATCO↑                          [yes it is national-
28 B:    always SATCO then Bahrainco so since it might be under the
29       patronage of His Excellency (.) er it will be
30 D:    (.)the first logo will be SATCO and then Bahrainco
31 B:    yes
32 D:    OK (.) just give us the logo copy of the logo
```

In this extract, the issue of the logos is brought to the surface by Dr Sara; in line 1 she starts her turn using the discourse marker 'so' to draw attention to the draft design of the logo. Before anyone makes any comment, she uses an evaluative phrase, 'this is fairly nice', and then immediately refers to the possibility of adjusting the size, not the position, of the three logos. This might mean that Dr Sara senses the disagreement and uses this as a strategy to 'test the water'. This prompts Badria's interruption in line 5; she code-switches to Arabic and directs her comment to Amal in a whispering manner, instantly excluding Dr Sara and other participants from the conversation. While this part of the conversation between Badria and Amal (lines 5–16) is hard to decipher owing to the whispering, all participants (except Dr Sara, because she doesn't speak or comprehend Arabic) are still able to follow the thread. Badria and Amal start recalling an earlier incident where the Minister was not happy with the position of

SATCO's logo and forced them to change it. Badria's decision to recall this incident and share it with Amal may serve the purpose of contesting the equal positioning of the logos suggested by Dr Sara in line 1. The contestation is evident in her next utterance as she uses hedges to raise the concern without sounding assertive: 'so I don't know at least er' (line 10). Amal's response is vague and her intentions are not clear. She first issues the repeated affirmative 'yeah yeah', but later follows it with two questions related to the presence of the Minister in the event: first in line 11, asking about whether the Minister is actually coming to the conference, and second in line 14, asking about whether the event is going to be under his patronage. Badria expresses her uncertainty about his attendance, first with the epistemic modal particle 'maybe', then with the repetitive use of the linguistic marker for uncertainty, 'I don't know' (lines 12–13).

This incident instigates a whispered, private discussion between Badria, Amal and Sonia. Having been excluded from the discussion, Dr Sara voices her right to be included; she interrupts Badria and Amal using the repeated imperative 'tell us tell us', softened by the politeness marker 'please' (line 19). The use of the inclusive pronoun 'us', rather than the first person pronoun 'me', can be interpreted as an attempt to disguise her pursuit of equal power in the meeting. Badria seems surprised at Dr Sara's forceful interruption as she issues an exclamatory response 'sorry↑', to which Dr Sara responds one more time with the imperative demanding to be included in the private discussion: 'tell us whatever that…'. Her forcefulness and persistence evokes laughter from everyone, even Badria, who replies back with a humorous, yet reassuring tone: 'we are discussing it and we will tell you'. In the next turn, Badria appears to recognise Dr Sara's feeling of exclusion and attempts to repair the misunderstanding. She offers an explanation of the nature of the hierarchy in the company, starting with the discourse marker 'you know' followed by 'SATCO… is the mother company' and 'it's always SATCO then Bahrainco' (lines 28–29), and provides background information with reference to the Minister. Her use of the honorific in this context, 'His Excellency' (line 29), can be interpreted as an attempt to preserve traditional Arabic (verbal) norms of status and hierarchy. Meanwhile, Dr Sara is attentively listening to Badria using back channelling, repetition and rephrasing (lines 25, 27 and 30); she finally appears to comprehend the bigger context as well as the unwritten rules of hierarchy between Bahrainco and SATCO as she echoes Badria's ideas in her utterance, 'the first logo will be SATCO and then Bahrainco' (line 30). When Badria confirms the statement with

an affirmative 'Yes', Dr Sara immediately shows her compliance: 'OK. just give us the logo copy of the logo' (line 32). Five lines later, Dr Sara seems to disregard Badria's earlier explanation and makes another suggestion with regard to the logos.

Extract 2: 'Do you want these guys to lose their jobs?'

(B=Badria, Chair; D=Dr Sara, UOD representative, female; A=Amal, SATCO representative, female; O=Omar; team member, male)

```
33 D:   see (.) er what we are doing here is that Bahrainco and UOD are
34      doing it but supported by (.) or something by (.) we can write
35      SATCO (.) it is like putting it down (.)
36 O:   in here↑
37 D:   I don't [know
39 B:           [hehehe
40 O:   tahat etkhaloon el-logo↑hai[hai(down you put the logo↑ it's it's)
41 A:                              [we Amal felkommiti↑(And Amal in the
42      committee↑)
43      (Laughter from Badria and others)
44 B:   see (.) I I think at least (.) whatever is going to show (.)
45      [at that day] (.) it has to have SATCO's logo on it
46 A:   [at that day]
47 D:   OK (.) fine (.) just give us the thing and we'll put it on the
48      backdrop and all the things on that day
```

(50 lines later, following a long heated discussion on the same issue)

```
49 D:   what happens is that usually the main people are er on top (.)and
50      the ones who're supporting or something come at the base
51 B:   we don't accept this
52 A:   [no
53 O:   [no
54 D:   [(wha-)
55 B:   [for example in the opening of the Centre (.) it was always SATCO
56      then Bahrainco (.) but that was an event between Bah-in Bahrainco
57 A:   yeah this is what I am saying (.)in similar [er events like this
58 B:                                              [in the GPC event
59 A:   GPC (.) it happened before (.) so we ar- I know we know (.)
60      [similar to this case
61 O:   [usually we put all of them on the bottom
62 A:    at the bottom
63 D:   £we can put UOD on top and [we can£
64 B:                             [no no (laughter from everyone) £ do
65      you want these guys to lose their jobs£ (laughter from everyone)
```

In this extract, shortly after the logos discussion ends and the meeting takes another turn, Dr Sara takes advantage of a pause and makes another suggestion to place Bahrainco and UOD's logos on top and SATCO's

logo at the bottom of the backdrop (line 33–35). Badria refrains from commenting, perhaps because she is irritated, or possibly to allow others to take the floor and explain the situation to Dr Sara. Omar exclaims, clearly surprised by Dr Sara's persistence and attempt to challenge the long established hierarchy, with the words 'in here↑' (line 36). Badria and Amal have just explained to Dr Sara a few minutes ago that, based on prior experiences, the Minister, who is the most powerful figure in the industry, would never allow Bahrainco's logo to be placed ahead of SATCO's because the logos' positions represent superiority. Dr Sara's tone immediately moderates as she appears to sense that her suggestion is unacceptable: 'I don't know' (line 37), to which Badria responds with laughter (line 38). Amal, clearly upset, takes the floor issuing an exclamatory rhetorical question in Arabic, perhaps to emphasise the gravity of the proposal: '*tahat etkhaloon el-logo*↑'[down you put the logo↑]. Omar tries to build on Amal's comment in Arabic as well, but she interrupts him to continue her objection with a seemingly sarcastic tone: '*we Amal felkommity*↑'[And Amal in the Committee↑] (line 41). Her comment evokes laughter from all of the participants because it draws their attention to the irony of the situation: how can SATCO be downgraded when Amal (the representative) is among the participants of the meeting? It seems that her sole job there is to ensure that things are working to SATCO's satisfaction. Her comment also implies the impossibility of implementing Dr Sara's suggestion, and had it been carried out, it might have dire consequences (especially for Amal).

In the next turn, Badria's patience is seemingly running out; she ends her silence and issues an assertive statement using the imperative (which functions here as a discourse marker) 'see', possibly to assert herself and draw Dr Sara's attention to the important issue. This is followed by a powerful collective response from Badria and Amal. First, Badria uses the personal pronoun 'I' combined with the hypothetical phrase 'I think whatever is going to show'. Amal joins Badria to construct the refusal and build on her comment to specify the finality of this decision (lines 44–46). Badria simultaneously echoes Amal's words, 'at that day', then ends her turn with an assertive statement using the deontic modal verb 'has to': 'it has to have SATCO's logo on it'. As in the first extract, Dr Sara immediately complies with Badria's assertive order to include SATCO's logo in the backdrop, invitation cards, leaflets and other publicity (lines 47–48).

However, 50 lines later, and after a long heated discussion on the same issue, Dr Sara, still resisting the idea of placing SATCO's logo on top, attempts to convince the participants of her stance by tapping into her expert position. She offers her expert knowledge of the norms of conference planning and execution protocols (lines 49–50), to which Badria responds with another unmitigated refusal using the corporate 'we': 'We don't accept this'. Amal and Omar also join to emulate Badria's refusal with the use of a bald, on-record negative, 'no' (lines 51–53). When Dr Sara tries to comment, Badria interrupts her to explain the reason behind this bald refusal; she recounts an incident of a previous event where such hierarchical norms had to be implemented (line 55). In lines 59–62, both Amal and Omar cooperate to construct and narrate their experiences of previous events where they had to enforce the same norms. Dr Sara humours them by suggesting that UOD's logo should be on top (line 63). Obviously a joke, everybody laughs and Badria issues a direct negation, 'no no' followed by a humorous remark 'Do you want these guys to lose their job' (lines 64–65).

As evident from the analysis, Badria is a resourceful leader who utilises a range of assertive language strategies (e.g. interrupting, withholding information, issuing direct orders, decisions and refusals) and facilitative language strategies (e.g. supportive humour, issuing mitigated orders, sharing power, explaining, justifying, using polite markers, laughter) to achieve leadership goals.

Hanan's Case Study

Hanan is a senior engineer whose work in the Engineering Department in Bahrainco extends over 20 years. Throughout her career, she has been entrusted with managing important and critical projects. Recently, she has been assigned to lead a team of engineers and technicians in a major nationwide project. Data for this case study are taken from a meeting, lasting one hour and thirty minutes, between Hanan and her team members, to discuss activities and action plans for this critical project. The team consists of three male engineers: one Bahraini engineer (Amir) from Bahrainco and two contractor engineers of Indian origin (Raj and Vivek). They work for a foreign contractor which is collaborating with Bahrainco in this project. Although none of the participants is the direct subordinate of Hanan, she is the highest ranking participant and the one managing the project, and they are all expected to report to her and follow her instructions. Furthermore, Hanan and Amir are both superiors to Raj and Vivek

who cooperate and work together to manage the project. Hanan has total authority over the key decisions and Amir directly supervises the contractor's work in the field. This is apparent in the meeting as Amir sometimes takes charge of the conversations.

The meeting takes place wholly in English, essentially because Raj and Vivek do not speak Arabic. Working with this particular meeting has been a challenge for me because of the mainly technical jargon used, which made most of the conversation unintelligible to me. Another difficulty I encountered in transcribing the meeting was the incomprehensibility of Hanan's talk as her voice was very low and toned down. This, from my observation, is characteristic of Hanan and not peculiar to this meeting as I learnt from the interviews with colleagues that she is known to be a softly spoken person. The context of this a study is a regular meeting for the team with the general purpose of following up and assessing work progress, solving problems, assigning tasks, and devising contingency plans. Hanan and her team members go through a checklist of action points and Amir, Raj and Vivek cooperate and alternate in answering her inquiries and updating her with the work progress.

The extract below takes place within a mid-meeting discussion of a technical procedure. ATG1 is the name of the new system with which Hanan's team are working, a system that is not yet known to the operators and technicians. Hanan is discussing with her team members the message that should be displayed to the operators and technicians. Raj suggests that providing only the technical terms (e.g. ATG1) is enough provided that they train and inform the operators beforehand, but Hanan has her doubts.

Extract 1: 'Even I will forget'

(H=Hanan, Chair; A=Amir, engineer, male; R=Raj, contractor engineer, male; V=Vivek, contractor engineer, male; ATG=operation system; K40=radar detector; FAC= field advanced controllers)

```
1 R:    yeah basically ATG1 (.) yeah the only controllers comes in
2       particular ATG only (.) so (.) what we are describing here is (.)
3       it is ATG1 and the corresponding loop controller (.) that is say
4       (.) ATG1 K40(.) ATG1[(-)
5 H:    [(-) you mean this message will be displayed
6       to operators↑
7 R:    yes
8 H:    you think operator will understand ATG1↑
```

```
 9 A:    it is confusing
10 V:    that's OK [we will
11 H:            [but it is er in a way (.) it's it's good as a
12       maintenance er (.) when the maintenance guy come (.) he will
13       interpret it he will say yeah this is coming from ATG1 (.) so yes
14       maybe the message is not (.) cannot be fully interpreted by the
15       operator (.) eventually I think (.) we need the word ATG (.) I
16       guess in the er message (.) we need it=
17 A:                                       = we need it
18 R:    we get it↑
19 A:    yes in case that you say that all the the controllers are off
20       then we will display a message [say that ATG
21 V:                                   [no we will (--) we will educate
22       the operator that (.) er it is in the model (.) already it has
23       been (-) under the FAC FAC the controller (.) you have to see
24       that alarm (.) based on that controllers (.) yeah otherwise we
25       will educate the er operators
26 H:    emm
```

(After 55 lines of a discussion between Amir, Raj and Vivek about the best way to implement the new system without confusing the operators)

```
27 H:    well er (0.3) (looking at some papers) ATG1 because I am a system
28       person (.) I understand [ATG means something to me
29 R:                            [yeah meaningful
30 H:    meaningful (.) but as long as we will get an alarm (3)
31 R:    but we can educate them (.) it's very
32 H:    you forget (.) even me after a while I will forget (.) ATG1 (.)
33       it is connected to controllers or to BMS (.) I will forget (.) I
34       [will forget
35 A:    [you have to go back to the drawings=
36 R:                                       =yeah exactly (.) so it's
37       better to have ATG1 and AC001
38 H:    yeah
39 V:    (-) then alarm will be the same [(.) so we [will er (--)
40 H:                                    [yeah [we will (.) yeah
```

The extract begins with Raj attempting to clarify a suggestion he made earlier about providing a simple description of the type of the 'ATG1' for the operators in the control rooms (lines 1–4). Hanan, who seems to be not quite in favour of the idea, shows her (negative) surprise at his suggestion by asking him for further clarification (lines 5–6). When he responds with the affirmative, she continues the questioning, which may reflect her disapproval of the suggestion: 'you think operator will understand ATG1 ↑' (line 8). Amir builds on Hanan's indirect criticism with a negative, evaluative adjective: 'it's confusing' (line 9). Hanan allows a few seconds before she takes the floor; perhaps she is waiting for Raj to respond with a justification. Instead Vivek takes the floor to express his immediate compliance: 'that's OK we will' (line 10). Hanan might have

felt that she was a little harsh with him because her next turn is much more mitigated. She issues an argument weighing 'the pros and cons' of the proposal. At first, she shifts her questioning tone into a more egalitarian and open expression. She positively evaluates Raj's proposal: 'it's it's good as a maintenance'; then, perhaps in order to show Raj that she understands his point of view, she adds further justification of why she thinks it is a good idea (lines 12–13). She then draws a quick reference to why she is concerned in the first place (line 14) and finally she comes to a conclusion where she partially takes up Raj's suggestion using various hedging devices : 'I think', 'I guess' (line 15–16). Finally she issues a more definitive phrase using the inclusive 'we' form and a deontic modal: 'we need it'. Amir immediately picks up Hanan's phrase and echoes it (line 17). Here, Raj responds immediately with a compliant question to show his readiness to follow Hanan's instructions: 'we get it↑'. Interestingly, it is Amir, not Hanan, who responds to his question with an affirmative 'yes' followed by further discussion of the particulars of the implementation (lines 19–20). Vivek, as the specialist technician, takes the floor to explain his and his partner's vision for implementing the new system (lines 21–25).

After this prolonged discussion about the best way to implement the new system without confusing the operators, Hanan, having been attentively listening this whole time, finally makes a contribution (line 27). She begins by acknowledging Raj and Vivek's point of view with the adverbial 'well' to indicate that she is going to present a counter argument. She takes three seconds (perhaps to gather her thoughts or to retain their attention), then she explains her concerns over their suggestion by referring to her own experience and expertise in the matter: 'I am a system person I understand ATG means something to me' (lines 27–28). Her argument is that the operators will get confused because, unlike her, ATG1 is not familiar to them. Raj again shows total support and compliance to Hanan by issuing the minimal response 'yeah' and rephrasing her words 'meaningful'. Hanan acknowledges Raj's contribution echoing the word 'meaningful', and carries on with her argument. After three seconds of silence, Raj repeats his earlier suggestion to 'educate' the operators and train them, to which Hanan immediately objects: 'they forget'. She tries to make her point by referring to her own personal abilities as an example: 'even me after a while I will forget' with repeated emphasis: 'I will forget (.) I will forget' (lines 32–33). She also gives further justification of why his suggestion is not feasible: 'it is connected to controllers or to BMS'. Amir, having interrupted Hanan, supports her by co-constructing and building on her argument. Raj simultaneously agrees to Amir and Hanan's argument and modifies his proposal

(line 36). Raj explains further their action plan (line 37). In the meantime, Hanan listens attentively issuing several minimal responses: 'yeah' and finally making a decision using the inclusive 'we' to stress that it is joint endeavour: 'we will (.) yeah' (line 40).

The second extract takes place approximately 100 lines later. Hanan is being critical of Raj and Vivek's lack of planning and time management strategies, and their failure to meet the deadlines and fulfil their promises:

Extract 2: 'Your visa is valid until 29'

(H=Hanan, Chair; A=Amir, engineer, male; R=Raj, contractor engineer, male; V=Vivek, contractor engineer, male; HMI= Human machine interface)

```
41 A:   you have to do that the description (.) for the controller and
42      pop ups↑
43 R:   description (.) it's both er finished up already
44 H:   everything will be↑
45 R:   no no the er (.) OK (.) no this I know I will
46      complete it
47 H:   yeah but (.)£ tell me when I mean £
48      (everybody is laughing)
49 H:   £what's the time now£↑
50      (more laughter)
51 H:   I don't want you to die [hehehehe
52 V:                           [£(---)£
53 R:                           [£ if this guy er this guy says today
54      means till tomorrow 12 till tomorrow morning£
55 H:    tomorrow (-) till tomorrow morning 6 am (.) and you will come
56      tomorrow morning (.)
57 V:   HMI I can er work on (.) job design I can work on
58 R:   no actually (.) once we complete this er dryer testing and the
59      fixing of the small er that (.) HMI things (---) and myself and
60      Amir (.) we're concentrating on the 39 and those communication
61      and testing so [I thi-
62 A:                  [we don't need the N44 for testing IL (.) two
63      days↑
64 R:   in fact (.) he was asking me if I will do the er 39 communication
65      (-) but I told him you have (.) many work here [so
66 H:                                                  [£you ha- there
67      are other work [I haven't spotted (.) your visa is valid until 29
68 A:                  [hehehe
69 V:   yeah 29
70 A:   today is 22
71 V:   some er
72 H:   you have how many hours until 29↑
73      (Laughter from all)
```

The extract starts with Amir issuing a directive to Raj using a deontic modal verb, 'you have to' (line 41). When Raj answers that the task is already finished, Hanan doesn't appear fully convinced of Raj's claim and issues a checking statement: 'everything will be↑' (line 44). Raj appears confused, perhaps because he understands the hint, despite his use of hedges in line 45 'no no the er (.) OK (.) this er' followed by a promise to meet the deadline, 'no this I know I will complete it'. Here, Hanan uses banter to indirectly criticise Raj and Vivek for their failure to meet the deadlines. Her banter consists of questioning Raj about the exact time he intends to finish the tasks: 'yeah but (.) tell me when' (line 47), and 'what's the time now' (line 49). Her exaggerated questions trigger laughter from everyone in the room, and she carries it further by ironically implying that she is afraid he will die from hard work (line 51).

Raj, who seems to be more voluble than his team-mate, defends himself and uses a variety of techniques to avoid the blame. He starts by redirecting the attention and banter to his partner (lines 53–54), then he forces Amir to get involved in his next turn by emphasising their work as a joint endeavour (lines 58–61). Amir instantly resists being positioned as a partner and emphasises his superiority as he interrupts Raj and issues a challenging statement in line 62 'we don't need the N44 for testing IL (.) two days↑'.

In the next turn, Raj's efforts to deflect the blame from himself, far from being successful, seem to be counterproductive. While he sets to blaming Vivek for the delay, he reveals that there are many other unaccomplished tasks that Hanan and Amir are unaware of (lines 64–65). Evidently, Hanan, smiling, interrupts him and inquires about the unfinished work, perhaps to hide her great frustration '£you ha- there are other work I haven't spotted' (lines 66–67). This triggers laughter by Amir and more banter from Hanan, which she takes further by issuing a disguised threat using the same exaggerated questioning technique, but this time with a reminder of Raj and Vivek's visa expiration date, 'your visa is valid until 29', 'you have how many hours until 29↑'(lines 67 and 72 respectively). Amir co-constructs the banter sequence issuing a supportive comment, 'today is 22' followed by a sarcastic laugh (line 70). The purpose of the humour and the questions may be to stress the lack of time and the importance of meeting deadlines in such a critical project.

While Hanan is task-oriented and mostly uses a direct unmitigated language with her subordinate, she also utilises humour and other less direct strategies (listening, negotiating, weighing pros and cons) to criticise subordinates and accomplish transactions.

Fatima's Case Study

Fatima is one of three female superintendents of the HR department
in Bahrainco. Similar to Badria and Hanan, she has worked in the same
department for over 20 years and she has been promoted to a manage-
ment position three years prior to this study. Data for this study com-
prise primarily an informal meeting between Fatima and her HR officer
subordinates who involve four participants: three men (Salem, Ahmed
and Shareef) and one woman (Bayan). There is also a mention of Sana, a
female superintendent in the same department, and Hussein, a previous
male general manager; neither are present in the meeting. All participants
are Bahrainis and the dominant language of the meeting is Arabic with
few instances of code-switching to English. Fatima often uses traditional
Arabic expressions (e.g. inshallah, mashalla); these instances will be indi-
cated as they appeared in the extracts with their translation in parenthesis.

The purpose of the meeting is primarily informative. Fatima is leaving
on a business trip and she has gathered her subordinates to brief them
about the major changes taking place in the organisation and the HR
department, such as restructuring the company, opening a help centre,
and changes in time-keeping regulations.

In the extract below, Fatima has just shared 'inside information' with her
subordinates about the view of Multico (a pseudonym), an international
consultancy firm, on the restructuring of all Bahrainco's departments,
including HR. The restructuring process might eventually lead to a num-
ber of job losses, which has raised some speculations and concerns. Prior
to this extract, Salem complains about the possible increase in his workload
when his direct superior (Sana, an older female colleague) retires soon.

Extract 1: 'Your situation is critical'

*(F=Fatima, Chair; S=Salem, HR officer, male; Sana=a superintendent,
male, not present; female; Hussein=a general manager, not present, male)*

```
1 F:     your situation is critical (.) also your section is in a critical
2        position (.) your section is one of those that Multico has a
3        strong view about
4        (some people laugh)
5 S:     [heheheheh
6 F:     [so: (.) I can't tell you anything now because (.) er the
7        management might not agree with their view of the section (.) I
8        mean even before (.) and this happened a few times that
9        suggestions come up that why don't you give this section to (…)
10       for example instead of you doing it (.) give it to another
```

```
11      company to handle it
12 S:   what about us↑
13 F:   and you: (.) we will have you rotate
14      (everyone laughs)
15 F:   £we can't let you off£
16 S:   rotation how↑
17 F:   no no (.) this is just me [(--)
18 S:                             [as an HR officer OK (.) but for
19      example if they say as [an engineer
20 F:                          [no no (.) no actually there's a
21      possibility they would say (.) you're HR you should discharge
22      some people (.) so: er (.) to be frank I have no clue (.) til
23      now I haven't been informed about Multico's general vision but er
24      I know er there is an emphasis on decreasing the staff in HR (.)
25      even decreasing the number of the superintendents (.) decreasing
26      the number of the sections
27 S:   I mean er (.) let's say next year (.) Sana is not here (.) in
28      this case I can't take a vacation
29 F:   we don't know what's going to happen maybe maybe they might say
30      Salem (.) we will give Sana an extension (.) we make use of her
31      since we will have her stay (.) er I mean (.) I don't I don't
32      know frankly because these things are not discussed (.) so
33      certainly they have something in mind (.) but till now it has not
34      been passed on to us (.) I mean Sana is leaving the company (.)
35      her leaving arrangements are going on (.) but er I am sure that
36      they are aware of it (.) Hussain knows (.) but I can share this
37      concern
```

The extract begins with Fatima responding to Salem's complaints with a euphemistic expression in Arabic that indicates bad news, 'your section is one of those that Multico has a strong view about', which means 'your section may be closed down'. The likelihood that Fatima's words are humorously delivered is indicated by her colleagues' laughter in response, to which Salem further answers with a nervous laugh, perhaps to hide feelings of surprise and disappointment (line 5). With a 'humorous tone', Fatima follows up Salem's laugh with a vague and rather long explanation (lines 6–11), which fails to alleviate the message of uncertainty. She starts by narrating possible scenarios using an epistemic modal verb form, 'the management might not agree with their view of the section', and recalling previous times when Bahrainco did not follow Multico's advice (lines 7–8).

Salem responds through employing a series of complaints (e.g. line 12: 'what about us?↑'), which signal a certain dependence on Fatima. Also, his use of the inclusive pronoun 'us' is an implication that this change will reflect badly on almost everyone and that he is acting as an advocate for the

whole team. Fatima's reply in line 13, 'and you: (.) we will have you rotate', again has a humorous effect as she and everyone else – except Salem – responds with a laugh. She further builds on the teasing by saying that 'rotation' is better than laying Salem off (lines 13 and 15). While everybody finds this amusing (line 14), Salem does not as he responds with serious questions in lines 16 and 18 over the changes in his job: 'rotation how↑'; 'as HR officer OK (.) but for example if they say [as engineer'. Whether he dislikes being teased by his boss or whether he is too concerned about the issue to go along with it, Fatima seems to sense his distress in line 20 as she immediately stops her sequence of humour, negates what she has said earlier, and then switches back to serious talk. She then answers his questions and attends to Salem's concerns with damage-limiting answers but indicating more positive prospects this time: 'no no (.) this is just me' 'no no (.) no actually there's a possibility…' (lines 20–26).

However, despite everything Fatima has just said, Salem returns to the same issue using a series of complaining claims (lines 27–28). In her response, Fatima uses an agentless passive 'I don't I don't know frankly because these things <u>are not discussed</u> (my underline)' in order to convey the uncertainty of matters and her own lack of agency in the process. She suggests that it is the management's decision, and in lines 29–30, she, just like the rest of the team, is merely a passive receiver: 'but till now it was not passed on to us'. Just when she has identified herself with the team, Fatima immediately shows her affiliation to the management in line 36, and her general manager in particular: 'Hussein knows (.) but I can share this concern'. Throughout this exchange she balances a distancing authority and humour with a degree of sensitivity to her subordinate's concerns.

The second extract takes place towards the end of this meeting; Fatima has just mentioned that she has to leave the team for a week, to take a business trip to Japan.

Extract 2: 'I will get you mini Japanese'

(F=Fatima, Chair; A=Ahmed, HR officer; male, B=Bayan, HR officer, female; Khaled Abdulla= previous superintendent, not present, male)

```
38 F:   good luck inshallah (God willing) (.) and I know you won't get
39      lost without me (.) and you are [inshallah
40 B:                                   [we are lost without you Fatima
41 F:   afa Aleikum (you will be fine)
42      (A number of people laughing and commenting at the same time)
43 F:   I mean er with you I worked with you guys you didn't give me hard
44      time (.) I haven't encountered problems with you (.) er and I
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45      would like to continue this way I mean I inherited you from
46      Khaled Abdullah (.) Khaled Abdullah used to say my section is
47      the best section
48      (everyone laughs)
49 F:   so I mean I haven't had any problems with you to be frank (.)
50      Ahmed I must say (.) that I am thankful to Ahmed because I gave
51      him so so much work and he backed me up (.) and I told Hussein
52      frankly Ahmed worked hard (.) really I mean you were a big
53      support (.) you did good
54 A:   thank you
55      (Some people are laughing and others smiling)
56 F:   and I expect that you will all help him in the Centre (.) don't
57      you go disturb him (.) give him hard time↑(1) so: (.) good luck I
58      think you are going to do a good job
59 A:   inshallah
60 F:   you will (1) and thank you guys (.) and I will see you
61      inshallah
62      (everyone says inshallah)
63 B:   [you go and come back safe inshallah
64 F:   [do you want me to get you anything from Japan↑ I myself don't
65      know
66      what's in there
67      (everyone laughs)
68 F:   I will get you mini Japanese
69      (everyone laughs)
```

In the first turn, Fatima uses a series of positive and complimentary strategies to wish her team luck while she is away. By this cue, she implies that her team have a strong dependence upon her but simultaneously negates it in her words 'I know you won't be lost without me'. Badria's echoing of her leader's words in line 40, 'we are lost without you', may simply be a cue for a standard politeness ritual, or it may be a form of humorous banter between the two colleagues. Certainly this cue implies a level of closeness and dependency between them. In line 41, Fatima responds with an utterance that evokes laughter '*Afa aleikum*'. This Bahraini Arabic colloquial expression, meaning here 'You will be fine', which indexes a rather dismissive register to comment about her own worth, might evoke surprise and, hence, the response here of laughter.

The following turns for Fatima (lines 41–47) mainly consist of compliments and expressions of gratitude to her subordinates (e.g. 'you didn't give me hard time…'). Using several evaluative adjectives and phrases, she goes on complimenting Ahmed, by referring to her colleague indirectly with the words 'Ahmed I must say (.) that I am thankful to Ahmed because…', immediately followed by direct address 'really I mean you were a big support (.) you did good' and 'good luck I think you are going to do

a good job'. This use of extensive complimenting and emotional support directed both to Ahmed and the team might be interpreted as Fatima's effort to lift everybody's spirits in her absence, encourage them to be productive, and create a sense of loyalty and unity. Certainly the non-verbal communication from her team indicate their appreciation of her positive approach, as for example in line 55 '(Some people are laughing and others smiling.)', and there are several appreciative verbal acknowledgements (e.g. lines 54, 59, 62; 63).

After a series of complimentary exchanges, Fatima issues a mitigated request to the whole team in line 56 'and I expect that you will all help him in the centre', followed by a bald imperative 'don't you go disturb him' (line 57). Fatima is able to mitigate the effect of this directive by converting it into almost parent-like teasing, 'and don't you go disturb him (.) give him a hard time', so that neither Ahmed nor members of the team 'lose face'. She quickly follows this up with a series of further compliments.

Towards the end of this exchange, Fatima lightens the mood even further by asking her staff if they want any gifts from Japan, making a joke at the expense of Japanese people, 'I will get you mini Japanese' (line 68). This creates an effective 'us' versus a Japanese 'them' team dynamic, which indexes a strong sense of team solidarity within this CofP. Evidently, Fatima is a leader who priorities relational aspects of leadership and uses linguistic strategies (humour, compliments, indirect orders) to accomplish her leadership goals.

An Overview of the Three Cases

Here, I carry out a comparative analysis of the three case studies in light of Holmes's (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire in order to draw out general insights on the leadership practices that Bahraini senior women use with colleagues and subordinates in meetings. According to Holmes (2006), while a transactional style of leadership correlates with a language stereotypically coded as masculine, a relational style of leadership is congruent with a language stereotypically coded as feminine. The former style prioritises task-achievement and solving work-related problems, while the latter places greater emphasis on fostering colleague relationships (see Chap. 2, p.42). My analysis of the three case studies has revealed some variation in the ways the three senior women use language within their CofPs according to this repertoire.

In the first case study, Badria utilises a wide linguistic repertoire constantly shifting between a range of stereotypically masculine and stereotypically feminine linguistic strategies to achieve a set of interrelated transactional and relational leadership goals. From the analysis, it appears that Badria's main transactional goal is to organise the conference while ensuring that Bahrainco's interests are secured. Her main relational goal is to achieve the cooperation of colleagues in a smooth and facilitative manner. I consider that all goals of leadership are intertwined; in this case, while Badria utilises her power as a Chair to manage the meeting efficiently and accomplish the sub-tasks in the agenda (making decisions with regard to invitation cards, conference venues, seminars, and so on), she makes an obvious linguistic effort to fulfil relational aspects, involve and engage all parties, and maintain a pleasant atmosphere throughout the meeting. She alternates between using assertive language such as interrupting, withholding information, issuing direct orders, decisions and refusals in order to achieve her transactional goals, and facilitative language to engage with her subordinates, such as using supportive humour, mitigating orders, sharing power, explaining, justifying, using politeness markers, laughter, and so on.

There are instances in the data where Badria issues direct refusals with no mitigation. In Extract 2, after a long heated discussion on the logo issue, Dr Sara insists on her position to prioritise UOD and Bahrainco's logo over SATCO's. Therefore, a seemingly irritated Badria issues a bald, unmitigated refusal using the corporate 'we' to speak on the behalf of both Bahrainco and SATCO: 'we don't accept this' (line 52). Later on, however, Badria attempts to explain the reasons behind her blunt refusal (lines 56–57). This indicates that Badria, who is often receptive to suggestions, draws a line where achieving important transactions and maintaining company traditions are involved.

On the other hand, the analysis reflects a great tendency on Badria's part to consult, share power, and make collaborative decisions with other participants in the meeting, especially Amal. Instances of Badria consulting Amal and allowing her to take the floor, interrogate others, make decisions, issue refusals and so on are commonplace in the meeting data. For instance, in Extract 1 Badria has a private discussion with Amal in Arabic. When Dr Sara persists in finding out the content of their conversation, Badria's response constructs Amal and herself in an equally superior position where together they make the decisions and inform others: 'we are discussing it and we will tell you' (line 23).

Moreover, the relational practices of using humour and laughter seem to be significant characteristics of Badria's leadership. Holmes (2006: 41) distinguishes between a 'feminine or supportive style of humour' and a 'masculine or contestive style of humour'. Supportive humour is usually used to support and confirm the contribution of the previous speaker. In contrast, contestive humour is often used to challenge or disagree with the previous speaker by use of witty, challenging statements, teasing, banter, and so on. The meeting data show that Badria uses humour whenever she is confronted with an awkward, conflicting or frustrating situation. I have illustrated earlier the incident in Extract 1, where Badria is having a private conversation with Amal. Negotiating her position of authority, Dr Sara interrupts their whispering and implies her right to know what they are discussing. This is an awkward positioning for Badria where she needs to decide either to challenge Dr Sara or to share power and information with her. Badria's first responds with laughter, and then explains in a humorous tone that she was not planning to withhold the information from her: '£we are discussing it and we will tell you£ er you know (.) SATCO (.) is the mother company (.) OK↑' (line 23). The laughter and humorous tone in this example indicate Badria's discomfort at Dr Sara's rather direct implication. It also serves as a 'repair' strategy along with the justification and explanation that follow.

In the second case study, Hanan utilises an inventory of stereotypically masculine and feminine linguistic strategies to achieve work transactions, and primarily prioritises task accomplishment over relational goals of the workplace. At times, she compromises her team member's face needs for the sake of accomplishing certain goals or transactions. Throughout the meeting, Hanan uses normatively masculine strategies to assert her authority as the most senior person in the group and as the expert and most experienced person in the meeting. Examples of such strategies would be: giving direct statements when sharing expert knowledge, issuing unmitigated orders and instructions, disagreeing, confronting, questioning, interrupting, and holding the floor. Perhaps the most significant example of Hanan's utilisation of traditionally masculine linguistic strategies is her use of banter in Extract 2 to criticise work progress. As illustrated in the analysis, Hanan uses unmitigated, bald on-record humour to criticise the lack of planning and failed promises by the temporary contractor engineers (Raj and Vivek), and indirectly orders them to be more efficient. This gets potentially even more uncomfortable when Hanan refers to their visa end date which really sounds like a threat: 'your visa is valid until 29', 'you have

how many hours until 29↑' (lines 68, 72 respectively). This type of humour leans toward teasing and banter, which according to Holmes' (2006) linguistic repertoire model, falls into the more contestive, and therefore the more traditionally masculine end of the continuum.

While Hanan's linguistic choices reflect her preference to use traditionally masculine linguistic strategies to achieve transactional goals (such as directives, imperatives, checking statements, banter), she occasionally makes use of traditionally feminine linguistic strategies (such as highly hedged and mitigated language, consulting and listening to expert opinion, negotiating). These appear to be for the purpose of ensuring the achievement of tasks without disruptions or delays. Several examples of such behaviour can be found in Extract 1 where, prior to making an important decision, she attempts to gather as much information and details about the issue as possible, listening to others' suggestions, proposals, and expert opinions before making the final decision. This is apparent in a negotiation process and a decision-making moment in Extract 1. Hanan is discussing with her team members the message that should be displayed to operators and technicians. Although she is sceptical about the suggestion made by Raj, she responds by explaining her expert opinion in the matter and allowing him and his partner to clarify their point of view rather than completely dismissing it. After a few turns they all reach an agreement and Hanan finally makes a decision using the inclusive pronoun 'we' to stress the joint endeavour: 'yeah we will (.) yeah' (Extract 1, line 40)

Hanan's use of relational strategies and down-playing power is also evident in her significant collaboration with Amir to manage the project. She repeatedly allows Amir to take over the discussion/negotiation/floor questioning and directing the contractor engineers. For example in Extract 1, Hanan allows Amir to respond to Raj's question: 'we get it↑' with a decision: 'yes in case that you say that all the the controllers are off then we will display a message say that ATGl' (lines 18–20). Also, in Extract 2, Amir participates with Hanan in co-constructing the banter 'today is 22' (line 70). Based on the above analysis, Hanan's leadership style can be classified as normatively masculine (Holmes 2006). While she may resort to traditionally feminine linguistic strategies, if needed, to accomplish work, her linguistic choices are mainly associated with stereotypically masculine language.

Finally, Fatima's case study shows that she prioritises relational over transactional aspects of leadership such as creating an intimate and familial working environment, strengthening the sense of belonging to Bahrainco,

and considering her team members' emotional well-being and face needs. For relational purposes, Fatima uses a wide range of relational linguistic strategies such as issuing compliments, expressing appreciation, sharing power and information, attending to her subordinates' needs to save face, and so on. Fatima's relational leadership style is particularly evident in the way that she pays attention to her subordinates' face needs and the linguistic efforts she exerts in attending to their concerns. In Extract 1, when Salem expresses his concerns over his future career and work load, she uses various strategies to attend to his fears, such as teasing humour: 'and you: (.) we have you rotate… £we can't let you off' (lines 13, 15 respectively), and indirect vague language: '£I can't tell you anything now because (.) er the management might not agree with their view of the section', 'no actually there's a possibility they would say…' (lines 6–7 and 20–21 respectively).

Fatima's use of relational strategies to build her team's trust and solidarity is most notable during Extract 2. While wrapping up the meeting, she uses a wide range of relational practices to maintain relationships with her subordinates and create a sense of unity and loyalty to the CofP. First of all, she enacts an identity consistent with a caregiver or parent with her team members, indicating a sense of intimacy and dependency: 'I know you won't be lost without me' (line 39). She also issues several compliments and expressions of gratitude to her subordinates: e.g. 'you didn't give me hard time…', 'Ahmed I must say (.) that I am thankful to Ahmed because…', 'good luck I think you are going to do a good job', 'really I mean you were a big support (.) you did good' (lines 41–47). Most interestingly, Fatima jokingly asks her staff what presents they want from Japan (lines 64–69), which reconstructs the relationship between Fatima and her subordinates from simply a line manager in the workplace to a family member or a friend.

It is also apparent from the analysis that Fatima uses relational strategies, not just to maintain workplace relationships, but to accomplish work transactions as well. In the meeting, I noted that while Fatima uses leadership practices which may have a relational purpose on the surface, upon close analysis, it became apparent that she is utilising different types and genres of relational strategies (such as hedges, humour, explanations, compliments and narratives) to achieve transactional ends (such as requesting and informing). In Extract 1, she intends to share information about the enforced restructuring of the section, but when she senses Salem's distress, she shifts her tone using hedges, vague language, presenting other possible

scenarios and humour, all to lessen the effect of the news: 'I expect that you will all help him in the Centre (.) don't you go disturb him (.) give him hard time↑'. Using the lens of Holmes' repertoire, the analysis shows that Fatima deploys a spectrum of traditionally feminine linguistic strategies to maintain good team relationships, which in turn accomplishes her transactional leadership goals.

The analysis of the three case studies has evidently shown that while Badria, Hanan, and Fatima share many (demographic) aspects in common and have worked in the same company for over 20 years, each one has developed a distinct 'style' of leadership by prioritising different aspects and goals in the workplace and making linguistic choices to achieve these goals. Using Holmes's (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire, I conclude that Badria is a leader who balances transactional and relational goals, and her linguistic choices reflect this balance as she alternates between normatively masculine and feminine linguistic strategies depending on the context. Hanan, on the other hand, appears to place greater emphasis on work transactions and uses a mixture of traditionally masculine and feminine linguistic strategies to ensure that work transactions are accomplished in the most efficient manner. Finally, Fatima is a compassionate leader who may compromise or delay the accomplishment of work transactions if they would negatively affect her team members' social and emotional wellbeing. Fatima's emphasis on relational aspects of leadership is evident in her linguistic choices as she mainly uses traditionally feminine linguistic strategies to achieve both transactional and relational goals.

After these meetings, post-session interviews were held with the participants and some of the key insights are picked up in Chaps. 5 and 6.

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Women Leaders in the UK
by Judith Baxter

Abstract This chapter follows the same pattern as Chap. 3, and presents three case studies of senior women chairing meetings in the UK. These cases feature: Anna, who is a relatively new leader to her team and is trying to gain acceptance for a strategic approach to team meetings; Julie, who is HR Director of a large team and attempting to explain the management's aims for 'restructuring' the company; and Nicola, a Managing Director, who is discussing the need for cost savings and the possible redundancy of members of the workforce. In parallel with Chap. 3, this chapter uses FPDA to analyse each case study in turn, and makes a comparative analysis of the case studies through the lens of Holmes' (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire model.

In parallel with Chap. 3, the purpose of this chapter is to produce a denotative, micro-analysis of the language of women leaders running business meetings in UK companies. For this, linguistic evidence is needed in order to offer a range of interpretations of the practices, subject positions and discourses available to UK women leaders. The three cases in this chapter deploy widely ranging leadership practices within different UK companies and work functions. I wanted to investigate this

range and diversity of UK women's leadership practices, while exploring the richness and particularity of three unique cases (see Chap. 2 for background).

Anna's Case Study

Anna is a senior engineer with an academic background who works for a large, international engineering company based in London, UK. She has been recently transferred from a technical, operations role working with a team of predominantly male engineers in her company to a management directorship role leading the Research and Development (R&D) Department.

Both extracts below are taken from the monthly, R&D business meeting chaired by Anna, consisting of 20 colleagues who are her 'direct reports', and the team is equally divided between male and female team members. This is just her third time of chairing the meeting (alluded to in Extract 1 below). The meeting is driven by a detailed agenda that involves a sequence of reports from people with role responsibilities, followed by a discussion of the issues raised by each report. In this extract, Anna is reflecting aloud on the need to set up a 'sub-group' with the task of proposing new structure for meetings that distinguish between strategic and operational purposes. Earlier she has asked for team members to volunteer to join the sub-group.

Extract 1: 'We want more discussions'

(A=Anna, MD and Chair; B=Brian, team member, male; L=Liz, team member, female)

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 1 A:    well:: (.) this is why I was just wondering (.) do we need more
 2       meetings↑ (.) do we need more focused meetings↑ (.) do we need
 3       a separate discussion so this is more meaningful↑ (.) the
 4       subgroup to work up what we want to see on this:: (.) that's
 5       then meaningful quickly (.) especially for getting it in
 6       advance (.) rather than (.) trying to discuss this sort of
 7       thing in a forum this size (.) I'm I'm just (.) feeling (2)
 8       that this is my s::econd or third meeting (.) that it's:: (.)
 9       we want more:: (.) we want more discussions (.) we want more
10       detail (.) more understanding (2) what do we er↑ (3) if we're
11       gonna stop (2) if we break it down yes:: (2) it then starts to
12       open up a bigger debate (2)
13 B:    but some things °are just for information (.) and:: I think it's°
14       useful to receive this information (.)
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15 L:     [hmm
16 A:     [okay
17 B:     and the format of it (.) it can be for information that
18        doesn't mean it's not valuable (.)
19 A:     [okay
20 B:     [and it and it gives us some context (.) and I think we should
21        keep it
22 A:     good (.) okay (.) so we keep it↑
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In the monologic sequence from lines 1–12, Anna reflects aloud about the need for a new sub-group by asking three rhetorical questions in a row. She uses metapragmatic particles such as 'I am wondering' to index her thought processes. This technique, in theory, means that her ideas are open to discussion rather than predetermined proposals. Anna's alternation between the use of first person singular and plural ('I.... we') in these early lines suggest that this is not just a self-centred line of inquiry, but one where she is thinking on behalf of the whole team and initially gives an inclusive feel to the utterance. From lines 4–7, her intention becomes clearer as she then evaluates her questions with the repeated adjectival phrase 'that's then meaningful quickly', balancing this as a positively charged utterance against the negatively charged utterance 'rather than (.) trying to discuss this sort of thing in a forum this size'. In line 7, she appears to change tone and semantic direction by stepping out of the frame of this argument with the use of more metapragmatic particles such as, 'I'm I'm just (.) feeling (2) that this is my s::econd or third meeting'. This hints at a desire to be open with her team about her thinking processes and a desire to share them, rather than simply to tell team members what to do. Anna follows this in lines 9–12 with a set of proposals that do appear to answer the rhetorical questions she has posed earlier. However the effect of this could be to close down possible discussion about the issue among her team members as she has already given them the answers. It turns out that this preamble is far less open to shared discussion than the rhetorical structure of her utterance might indicate.

In the dialogic section of this extract from lines 13–22, Brian appears to disagree with Anna that the current business meeting format has no value. Using the adversative conjunction 'but', he makes a series of points to argue another purpose of departmental business meetings: the need to

impart information. It is not clear whether this is a point challenging or agreeing with Anna's argument for 'more discussions' in other fora, but his series of points are constructed as a disagreement (for example, his use of double negatives, 'it doesn't mean that it is not…'). At this point, Anna uses a series of agreement particles to show support for her colleague's objection, which closes down this line of argument.

We could speculate that, in this sequence, Anna is tentatively throwing out suggestions in the hope that one might 'land' with her team, but none does. Alternatively, we might argue that she is giving a false sense of making an issue open for team discussion. While she offers lots of openings to which members might conceivably respond, her monologic, hermetically-sealed, question-response structure closes off the scope for discussion. Whatever Anna's motive, Brian does raise an objection to her perceived argument, and she is quick to acquiesce to his counter-argument. This might indicate a desire to connect with her team.

In the next extract, Anna is still experiencing some difficulties with persuading her colleagues about the value of setting up a sub-group, and indeed, of encouraging them to volunteer to participate. Here, colleagues are digressing from the topic altogether by discussing perceived communication problems in the team, and in particular, the use of email. The extract was selected because this is a moment when the exchange between Anna and her colleagues is quite intense, engaged and focused, and exemplifies the relationship she is negotiating with them.

Extract 2: 'Are you volunteering to join the group?'

(A=Anna; S=Sue, team member, female; L=Liz, team member, female)

```
1 S:                            =because normally (.) the emails (.) I
2            mean there [are
3 A:                    [Sue↑(.)can I suggest that we don't take the actions
             now (.)
4 S:         [no no (.)
5 A:         [or discuss it now please
6 S:         I'm just saying we just need to (.) communication again (.) is
7            an issue really
8 L:         so we'll talk
9 A:         are you volunteering to join the [group↑
10 Voices:                                    [hehehheh
11 S:                                          [no no (.)
12           [heheh (.) I'll come back later
```

In line 1, Sue, a team member, is in mid-flow in her argument about the problems of using emails and the possibility of changing team practices in

email use. Anna interrupts her mid-sentence, which might be interpreted as a violation of a turn as it does not respect a turn-transition relevance point (Sacks et al. 1974). Anna signals a further expression of authority over Sue in her use of direct address ('Sue↑(.)'), followed by a mitigated command expressed as a question. Sue's apparent acquiescence to this command is reflected in the ambiguously used, negative agreement particles ('no no'). In line 5, Anna drives home her command by adjoining it with a second instruction, couched with the politeness particle 'please'. Sue's possibly subconscious use of the words 'no no' prefigures her next turn in lines 6–7, where she repeats her argument, perhaps indicating some resistance to being told what to do. Liz, a fellow team member, appears to support and build on Sue's resistance by articulating what the proposed 'action' would be. This provides Anna with a humorous opportunity once again to elicit support for volunteers, but the reaction of the rest of the team is to laugh, not to volunteer. This indexes that Anna's attempts to get volunteers are viewed as a running joke in the team. Sue jokily rejects the request and returns to her theme of pursuing her discussion about email reform.

In this sequence, Anna has used a combination of quite assertive language and more light-hearted encouragement to achieve her goal of getting team members to fulfil departmental tasks. While this extract ends as a good-natured exchange, Anna is ultimately unsuccessful in achieving her leadership goal. The failure of colleagues to volunteer for her proposed sub-group, and the sense that this venture has become a running joke in the team, indicates that Anna is struggling to gain support for her authority as a leader.

Julie's Case Study

As Board Director of Human Resources (HR) for a large transportation company, Julie is the line manager for ten Regional HR Directors (five men and five women), who meet together on a monthly basis to discuss a range of strategic management issues. The key topic for this half-day meeting is the major restructuring of the company, involving a significant number of staff changes and potential job losses at the most senior levels. The purpose of the meeting, which Julie chairs, is to brief colleagues about these changes, both at Board level and within the HR group, by means of a power point presentation. Julie has occupied her role for 2 years, and has just explained that she herself is about to be 'moved sideways' within the company, and that her HR post will be advertised externally. Prior to

the extract, everyone has 'checked in', which is noteworthy because a few participants appear not to know each other, even though the context is that of a regular directors' meeting forum.

Extract 1: 'I thought thoughts that might be in your minds…'

(J=Julie, HR Director and Chair; John=Chief Executive Officer (not present); Dale=another Board Director (not present))

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1       (Everyone 'checks-in' one by one)
2 J:    lovely (1) thank you brilliant (.) umm we will crack on (.)
3       umm I will (.) I've got sort of a big picture sort of a
4       business update that I thought I would just temporarily sort
5       of pause on that and come back to that and just do a little
6       bit around the HR sort of top line structure because that
7       might be a sort of nice little warm up and some of the
8       background er from er- that you might want to take off in
9       slightly different direction when we speak with John (.) er
10      when he comes in (.) does that make sense? everyone agree?
11      just to go on to this for a bit
12      (murmurs of assent)
13 J:   so er (.) umm (1) tsk (.) I don't know if I can get the
14      screen any better than that (.) and hopefully some of this is
15      starting to get a bit familiar now from the things I've sent
16      out (.) if you can't see it and you're too far away come down
17      and stand or squint (.) er I think really this is the top-
18      line level structure that you will have seen and some of the
19      questions and I thought thoughts that might be in your minds
20      is (.) er what's going to be the role of the Deputy Group HR
21      Director it was certainly one that was in mine so er I'll
22      pose and answer it as best I can for you guys (.) um John and
23      Dale (.) so it's John D. obviously CEO and Dale
24      (.) they are talking at the moment and discussing how they are
25      going to share um accountabilities between the two of them
26      (1) um sort of posing different thoughts er with each other
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Immediately obvious from the lay-out of this extract is that it is largely a monologue, punctuated by the odd elicitation of agreement from other participants (line 12), rather than interactional talk. This is unsurprising given that the initial purpose of the meeting is a one-way briefing rather than a question and answer session, although this latter purpose is anticipated in lines 8–9 ('you might want to take off in slightly different direction when we speak to John').

In line 2, Julie uses a series of positive and complimentary discourse markers ('lovely (1) thank you brilliant') which combine a topic change with the 'relational' function of showing appreciation of her colleagues

and their contributions. Her language then becomes more business-like in its use of the idiom 'we will crack on', followed by a clear explanation of her purpose ('I've got sort of a big picture sort of a business update'). However, in lines 3–7, Julie uses the hedge 'sort of' no less than five times, which has the effect of mitigating the transactional force of her words (Holmes 2006). At the same time, Julie uses a number of positioning and framing devices: while proposing that she will give 'a big picture', she then states that she will deviate from this and focus on HR restructuring first. In topic-shifting so quickly, she carries out a considerable amount of relational 'repair' work (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977). In lines 5–7, Julie uses mitigating and hedging devices, perhaps to diminish the effect of unexpectedly changing the topic (e.g. 'just do a little bit around the HR sort of top line structure'). Her use of relational meta-comment in line 7 further softens the effect of the topic shift when she says, 'that might be a nice little warm-up', but this utterance tails off somewhat uncertainly with the words, 'and some of the background er from er-..'. She then attempts to seek agreement from her colleagues for her topic shift in line 10 with the double question, 'does that make sense? everyone agree?'

From line 13, Julie makes a second topic change to the logistics of giving the presentation followed by further framing comments about the topic of company restructuring, which seem designed to reassure her audience: 'hopefully some of this is starting to get a bit familiar now…'. In combining logistical with topic-based talk, Julie once again does considerable 'relational work' (Holmes 2006; Schnurr 2009). On logistics, she continues to ensure that everyone can see the screen ('if you can't see it… stand or squint'), while in terms of the topic, she uses strategies to pre-empt questions and perhaps, criticism. Rather than the more conventional approach of giving a talk and then taking questions, Julie goes a step further. Using 'anticipatory double-voicing' (Baxter 2014: 5) in lines 18–19, she states that she will anticipate any likely questions the audience might have ('I thought thoughts that might be in your minds'), and then answer them on their behalf. In effect this takes away the audience's opportunity to she has offered to do the questioning for them. Arguably, she makes this double-voicing more palatable to her audience by expressly empathising with their supposed thoughts: 'it was certainly one [question] that was in mine'. In effect, Julie enacts an imaginative dialogue between her colleagues' assumed questions and her own response as a leader, making actual conversation

redundant: 'er I'll pose and answer it as best I can for you guys'. However, rather than conveying the answer to her question, 'what's going to be the role of the Deputy Group HR', Julie speculates in lines 25–26 about the thoughts of two of her (male) Board Director peers by suggesting that they are: 'sort of posing thoughts with each other'. This has the effect of distancing her from responsibility for the information, as well as from giving a direct or factual answer to her audience's assumed questions.

Extract 2: 'Just say that we were that brave one day…'

(J=Julie, Chair; A=Anne, a regional director and team member; C=Chris, team member; MTSP=Management Team Strategy Plan; ER=Employee Relations; IR=Industrial Relations, Mark, Steve, Dermot, Julian, Helen=other senior colleagues)

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1 A:    Julie does that mean they won't fill the job that reported to
2       [Charles
3 J:    [it's a very very good question Anne (.) what it means is that
4       er sort of central you know policy (thought) leadership sits
5       here (.) they will still have a Head of Safety for Operations
6       reporting in Mark's structure checking that the implementation
7       and that coaching and professional development of the safety
8       field people um is happening right (.) so the role that
9       sits under Mark's structure will matrix into Steve to
10      be part of that family but Steve does still sit hard wired
11      into um Ops (.) um and Mark (2) good question Anne
12      (3) Director of Commercial HR and Professional Functions is
13      Helen (.) um Director of Ops and Modernisation is myself
14      we've spoken about that in the plans for the future (.) er HR
15      shared Services Dermot (.)and um Director of HR
16      Policy and Engagement I think we've actually put the 'and
17      Engagement' in the title (.) now is Julian (3) now in terms
18      of-
19 C:   (coughs) sorry one thing I don't understand about that (.) I I
20      would have expected that to be part of Employee Relations
21 A:   yeah
22 C:   I just don't get the split
23 J:   right er (.) so when I go into each strand by strand
24      hopefully I can bring it alive a little bit more (.) it's a
25      really good point because er if say for example we want to
26      erm (.) er amend or update MTSP just say that we were that
27      brave one day that [we
28 C:                      [yeah
29 J:   wanted (laughs) to do that (…) would you say that that sits in
30      ER or IR or in the world of policy? those are the kinds of
31      transition batons we're going through as a Group leadership
32      team and battening down (.) (continues with update)
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At this point, at about 20 minutes into the meeting, colleagues have started to 'chip into' Julie's briefing and to question her about some of the detail on the power point presentation. As Julie does not 'select next speaker' (Sacks et al. 1974), Anne uses her line manager's name to attract her attention before asking a question about whether a particular senior job position will continue to exist. Using meta-comment, Julie attends very positively to her colleague's 'face needs' (Brown and Levinson 1987) with the compliment 'a very <u>very</u> good question Anne'. Julie then appears to answer the question directly with the positioning phrase, 'what it means is that…' However, her answer proves to be unnecessarily long-winded, given that she could have logically replied with a straight 'yes' or 'no'. Her answer indexes a 'dispreferred response' (Sacks et al. 1974), that is, the avoidance of a straightforward answer. Julie's indirect response indicates that Anne may have 'touched on a raw nerve' by identifying that 'restructuring' is a means of disguising job losses. Julie's lengthy answer running from lines 3–17, goes into considerable detail about people's roles and relationships, but fails to answer Anne's question about whether the job itself has been lost. The possibility that Julie is avoiding a direct answer is reinforced by her repetition of the phrase, 'good question Anne' in line 11. Under cover of offering approval, Julie appears to be flouting the cooperative principles of quantity (saying too much) and relevance (Grice 1975). At the end of this monologue, Julie still fails to answer Anne's question directly.

In line 19, Chris, another regional HR manager and subordinate, then self-selects by coughing and apologising in order to gain a conversational turn. The sense that Julie has failed to provide a clear answer to Anne's question is reinforced by Chris's question, in which he states his lack of understanding about the logic behind aspects of the restructuring. Anne adds her support ('yeah') and Chris repeats his point with the colloquial meta-comment, 'I just don't get the split'. In line 23, Julie appears to deploy a series of diversionary tactics to avoid giving a direct answer to Chris's question. With the discourse marker 'right', she signals that she has oriented to his question; she then steps out of the 'question and answer' frame to provide meta-comment on the future process of the briefing ('so when I go into each strand by strand hopefully I can bring it alive a little bit more'), which enables her to distance herself from answering the question directly. She then uses praise to attend to Chris' positive face

needs, and finally in lines 26–30, humour to construct a fantasy about a much more radical restructuring process ('just say that we were that brave one day…'). This invitation to her colleagues to visualise the process she herself is going through by posing the strategic questions that she and other senior directors are asking, encourages them to empathise with her position as their line manager. In so-doing, she succeeds in eliciting Chris' agreement ('yeah'), and then subtly distances her personal responsibility for the restructuring by implicating others. Using euphemistic, business jargon, Julie suggests that others are just as involved in the decision-making as she is, and that no final decisions have as yet been made: 'those are the kinds of transition batons we're going through as a Group leadership team and battening down'. Yet her use of the exclusive pronoun 'we' also indexes a certain distancing from her own HR team, and her allegiance to a more senior level in the management hierarchy where the important decisions are made.

Nicola's Case Study

Nicola is a Managing Director (MD) in a large, national logistics company in the UK (Logistico, a pseudonym), which is divided into four regions. She manages one of the regional teams comprising 14 directors, just two of whom are women. Apart from Nicola as MD, Helen is a senior HR director, Juliet is a junior 'special projects' manager, and another woman present, Jan, is Nicola's personal assistant taking minutes. However, none of these women speaks during the extracts analysed below. Nicola reports directly to the management board, which is based at the national headquarters in London. Nicola has worked for the company for most of her working career, and has been in the MD role for about four years. In my interview with Nicola, she told me that her appointment to the role had come about in response to company equality and diversity policies, which aimed to promote talented women quickly to senior posts. She also mentioned that her second-in-command, Bob, a long-serving Operations Director at the company, had been in competition with her to gain the MD post following a significant culture change programme.

The following two extracts are taken from one of the regional team's regular, monthly business meetings held in London. The topic of both extracts concerns the company's 'transformational plan' (not mentioned

explicitly here), which sets regional teams a number of targets to meet each year. These include reducing staffing costs such as overtime and the use of casual staff, while improving employment relations with the trades unions, and the quality of delivery services to customers. The meeting begins with a series of reports and PowerPoint presentations given by different members of the team. This extract is the start of a discussion that follows the last of these presentations given by Bob, the Operations Director, who has just presented graphs tracking the use and cost of overtime and casual staff over the previous two years.

Extract 1: 'Why why I really don't compute why'

(N=Nicola, Managing Director and Chair; B=Bob, Operations Manager; A= Alec Operations Assistant)

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 1 N:   could you do me a piece of data there track overtime versus er
        (.) I
 2      think it's about the level because er because what you're saying
 3      to me is this is covering core work hours (2) so I'd like to see
 4      some sort of tracking of that see what (.) er (.) I don't know (.) I
 5      think there's something wrong with the logic there because if the
 6      traffic declined (.) as well (.) why why I really don't compute why
 7      overtime should be above last year's shape (.) because we are putting
 8      more casuals in to replace wastage so I don't see why [we're drifting
 9 B:                                                         [no we're not
10      stopping the use of more casuals now
11 N:   no but this is since week nine(.) and we had a lot of overtime in
        I suppose operations I was thinking of the strikes last year or it
12      could be that that we lost the overtime for the strike dates last
13      year which depressed the yellow
14 A:   yeah
15 N:   but so I don't accept I don't think the logic that's put forward
16      about replacing wastage and er and I'm concerned about our general
17      drift into earnings which is being gripped around work alignment
18 B:   cunningly we already shared with the unions the average take home pay
19      well prior to this so that any drift at the moment won't get picked
20      up in the discussions so we've shared by unit (.) er take home pay
21      calculations um which Keith did for us so um if there's any drift
22      at the moment it won't get built into the discussions as we go along
23 N:   so so my request is more (.) ten thousand hours per week adrift more
24      than last year bottomed levelled down at thirty four now it's at
25      forty four thousand hours that's a hundred grand (2) um so I don't
26      understand why we spend a hundred grand more a week on on overtime
27      (.) simple question
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This extract is effectively a dialogue between Nicola and Bob, with just one back-channelling response from Alec, a more junior member of the team. Nicola begins with a lengthy eight-line response to Bob's presentation, which indicates that she is both chairing and leading the meeting, even if her comments are quite fractured and discontinuous. She begins with a command ('could you do me a piece of data there') using the pronouns 'you' and 'me' (rather than 'we' and 'us'), which indicates that she does not see herself as representing the whole team at this point, but just needing to address her own concerns as MD. In line 2, she attempts to interpret the data in her own words ('because what you're saying is…'), but finds that she is unable to do so ('er (.) I don't know (.) I think there's something wrong with the logic there'). The use of pausing, hesitations and unfinished clauses all suggest that she is struggling to make sense of the information Bob has given. She finishes by challenging the logic of the data, using a short, sharp, drilling questioning technique in line 6 ('why why I really don't compute why') and again in line 8 ('so I don't see why'). This style of interaction indicates her authority as a speaker, who is not afraid to think aloud at some length or to question her senior colleague.

At this point, Bob attempts to interrupt Nicola by disagreeing with her interpretation that they are failing to use casual workers. However Nicola overrides his point and continues with her 'thinking aloud' in order to make sense of the increased overtime costs 'since week nine'. In lines 15–17, she dismisses the argument that Bob must have previously given (presumably that overtime was needed to replace wastage), by making a number of expressive, evaluative comments ('so I don't accept… I don't think… I am concerned'). This series of meta-comments effectively index her authority as a leader who is prepared to dismiss the argument of her colleague in front of the rest of the team.

Interestingly, in lines 18–22, Bob does not attempt to dispute Nicola's negative evaluation; rather, he sidesteps the issue and thereby sidesteps confrontation with Nicola herself by suggesting that the extra overtime costs, which might have increased staff expectations of a higher salary, are unlikely to have been noticed by the unions. Nicola effectively overrides this contribution and continues her own line of critical thinking, indicated by the continuation discourse marker 'so so…'. Her final utterance then picks up on her previous turn by focusing upon the numerical detail of the loss that she calculates Bob's department has incurred by allowing more overtime compared to the previous financial year. She finishes with the almost patronisingly truncated meta-pragmatic comment, 'simple ques-

tion?' which means that she requires an answer to the killer question she posed at the start, which is in essence: 'why have overtime costs gone up when they should have gone down'?

In this extract, Nicola shows that she is prepared to confront a difficult issue head-on, by tackling a senior colleague on an area of possible incompetence in front of the rest of the team. Arguably, this shows a high degree of self-assurance as a leader. In this sequence at least, her colleague, Bob, appears to take the criticism in good spirit. The extract also indicates the levels of uncertainty that exist in large companies where there are both bottom-up pressures upon leaders from powerful worker unions to improve pay and conditions, and top-down pressures from senior management about meeting specific annual targets for enhancing the company's financial performance.

In this second extract, which occurs approximately half an hour after the first extract, members of the meeting are discussing the use of casual workers who have been in post for a number of months – much longer than was originally planned. Nicola is concerned that the workers in question may well accrue an entitlement to a more permanent post, and may certainly be expecting this as their contracts have been extended. However, she is unable to act because she has not been authorised by senior management either to allow these workers to retain their jobs or to make them redundant. Once again, the dialogue is solely between Nicola and her operations director, Bob, as the two most senior people in the room.

(N=Nicola, Chair; B=Bob, Operations Manager; A=Alec, Operations Assistant)

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1 N:   I think we should work out something that we say to them which is a
2      bit more positive (.) a holding statement you know (.) a firm holding
3      statement if you can have it like that because it's a bit of a vacuum
4      for these (.) incumbents
5 B:   well nothing's been said (.) well actually outside of this room we're
6      not having this debate
7 N:   so there's two things (.) there's two things (.) one Helen needs to
8      put pressure on the HR community to resolve this (.) likewise we've
9      delivered I know you have been but then I do think er (.) some sort
10     of messaging through to those substantive incumbents to say even if
11     it's just working on it you know that we're clear we're working on it
12     we're trying to get an answer but at the moment you're it's your job
13     and we're not taking you out of it (.) because they could be feeling
14     a bit rumpled (5) call me old fashioned
15 B:  well I'll call you old fashioned if you want me to (laughs) bu:h:t
16     actually um (.) fine (.) no issue with doing that (.) all I need to
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17      do is to make sure that the message we send now says we're (.) you
18      know (.) we're aware of the role change
19 N:   yeah
20 A:   yeah
21 B:   um (.) you might be you know a bit concerned about this (.) we're
22      not concerned about you at the moment we'll let you know what's
23      happening as opposed to we're working on this because that implies
24      that there is
25 N:   yeah that there may be change yeah? there might not be yeah? and it
26      is only for Lee I think and he can have conversations with three or
27      four people (.) er I think that'll be helpful for them to know what
28      what their future might hold (.) and the other two fellas we need to
29      get set so that we can go ahead with advertising or settling them
30 B:   (….) at the moment they are performing so well because they are
31      uncertain about their future
32      (laughter)
33 N:   works for all of us doesn't it
34      (laughter)
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In the first extended utterance (lines 1–4), Nicola proposes a solution to the perceived need to manage employee expectations – that Bob should prepare a 'holding statement' to present to certain casual workers. She shows that she is aware of what the effects of uncertainty might be upon these employees but using neutral, understated language: 'because it's a bit of a vacuum for these (.) incumbents'.

Bob's response in lines 5–6 ('nothing's been said…') could simply be providing the insight that there are no expectations from staff to manage, and that the problem is one of perception rather than an actual problem. His comment could also be touching on the 'politics' of management: that social realities can be controlled by management through carefully crafted use of 'spin'. In this case, no one outside their own team knows that they are discussing these employees' future, so there is no employee issue unless they make it one. As in Extract 1, Nicola chooses to ignore Bob's comment. This is indexed by the discourse marker 'so' in line 7, which acts as a conjunctive with her previous utterance, and by her repetition of the phrase 'there are two things' to preface her ensuing instructions in lines 7–14. She proposes a couple of actions to be taken by members of the team: to put pressure on HR to resolve the issue, and to send a message to the employees in question. Her use of language reveals a need to micro-manage this issue by actually formulating the words that might go into the message as if she is speaking to the employees. She then switches voice from second person to third person to make a meta-comment on the

perceived response of the employees to this message ('because they could feel a bit rumpled'). This shows an ability to visualise and empathise with the feelings of these employees. Nicola then uses double-voicing (Baxter 2014): that is, the use of 'anticipatory' language to pre-empt the threat of criticism from her colleagues, when she says 'call me old-fashioned'. This bit of double-voicing implies that Nicola acknowledges that today's senior managers are not expected to empathise too much with employees' feelings in the brave, new world of financial cutbacks and employee restructuring, and she appears to mock herself for expressing such feelings. Bob echoes her double-voicing ('I'll call you old-fashioned if you want'), perhaps to mock her self-deprecating comment, which is greeted by laughter from the team. However, he goes on to support her point about the need to construct an employee message, and from lines 21–24, he mirrors Nicola's technique of using second person voice to express the intended message.

It appears that Nicola's use of double-voicing has made her less directive and instructional, because for the rest of the extract she becomes more acquiescent and collaborative in her interaction with Bob. After agreeing with him in line 19 and again in line 25, she uses positive discourse markers ('yeah?… yeah?') to gain Bob's approval in their handling of the message to the employees. Her extended utterance (lines 25–29) exhibits a more tentative style than previously in the extract, in its use of meta-pragmatic particles framing her statements ('I think… I think'), and a greater use of hesitation and pausing. It is possible that she feels she has exposed a small weakness as a leader in identifying with the feelings of these casual workers when she is expected to act in a tough and decisive way. In line 30, Bob comments on the possible effects of uncertainty upon the group of casual workers by taking the more humorous view than uncertainty over the future of their jobs has unexpectedly made them perform well. Given that this is probably not an officially approved view in the company, Bob's comment triggers laughter from the team, and provides a springboard for Nicola to make a joke ('works for all of us doesn't it'). This use of co-constructed humour and the laughter it elicits in the team enables Nicola to regain 'face' after the earlier moment of self-exposure.

In this extract, Nicola once again demonstrates authority in handling her dominant senior colleague, and decisiveness in proposing solutions to address a particular management problem. However in contrast to the

previous extract, she expresses a more compassionate aspect of herself in empathising with employees who may be losing their jobs. Certainly this moment seems to have some effect on her own interactional practices, which become more co-constructed, hesitant and collegiate. I have argued that her use of double-voicing here indicates a level of uncertainty about expressing this more 'human' side publicly, which may be an issue in a company where leaders are expected to make tough decisions about jobs and redundancies.

An Overview of the Three Cases

In line with Chap. 3, I carry out a comparative analysis of the three case studies in light of Holmes' (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire for the purpose of drawing out general insights on the leadership practices that UK senior women use with colleagues and subordinates in meetings. According to Holmes (2006), while a transactional style of leadership correlates with language stereotypically coded as masculine, a relational style of leadership is congruent with language stereotypically coded as feminine. The former style prioritises task-achievement and solving work-related problems while the latter places greater emphasis on fostering colleague relationships (see Chap. 2, p. 42). According to Holmes (2006), leadership practices are shaped by the gendered identity of the CofP, not that of the leader. My analysis of the three CofPs reveals some variation in the ways the three senior women use language according to this repertoire.

In Anna's case, she appears to be speaking inclusively during the first extract (with her repeated use of 'we'), which might index a preference for relational practices. Initially she appears to open up a discussion about the need for her team to institute a new strategic, sub-group, but she fails to provide any openings for her team to ask questions or offer their opinions on her proposal. Her first utterance turns out to be monologic, introspective and self-sealed, providing her own answers to the questions she poses, rather than inviting her team to discuss them. This type of interactional practice, while reflective, is geared towards the transactional goal of setting up a new working group, but she is unable to encourage the cooperation of her team. Perhaps as a consequence, in the second extract Anna fails to meet her transactional goal of encouraging team members to volunteer for the sub-group. Again, she is primarily task-orientated, ironically cutting off her colleagues' wish to discuss communication issues, in the pursuit of her own goal. In terms of assessing how this CofP constructs Anna's

interactional style, there is evidence that this is an established CofP now in transition. Anna is the new member, the learner in this CofP, and she is being peripheralised by her own team as she struggles to adjust to its communicative norms. Given the difficulties Anna experiences in proposing her leadership agenda, it may be that this is a CofP that was historically accustomed to a greater use of relational practices from its leader.

In Julie's case, this is a leader who is more established within the CofP of her management team than Anna is, but who similarly uses a monologic interactional style. In contrast to Anna, Julie's opening to the meeting in the first extract combines both transactional and relational practices in that she specifies the goals to be achieved by the meeting, while at the same time carefully checking with colleagues that they are happy to 'go with' her agenda. Indeed, she uses a strong range of relational practices that might be deemed normatively feminised according to Holmes' (2006) linguistic repertoire. She shows that she is attentive to the needs and concerns of her colleagues by her use of compliments, tag questions to elicit a brief response, double-voicing to show appreciation of her audience's views, and framing comments to aid understanding. Yet, the upshot of her utterances in the first extract is not dissimilar to Anna's: rather than allowing her colleagues to provide contributions on the potentially controversial item of company restructuring, she provides the answers *for* them, effectively closing off full team engagement and debate. This may well index the sensitivity of the agenda item and Julie's fear about how members of the CofP will respond if they sense their community is under threat. In the second extract, we see a greater sense of this CofP in action. Here, Julie has opened up the floor to discussion, although the format is one of question-answer, with Julie providing all the responses. However, while there is much uncertainty expressed in Julie's meeting, she appears reasonably in control of the interactional sequence. Across both Julie's extracts, it is clear that the controversial agenda item needs very careful management and control, and her use of relational practices are fully harnessed to achieve this transactional end. It can only be assumed that Julie has learnt that the best way to manage uncertainty in this CofP is by means of a relational yet controlling approach to leadership.

Finally, Nicola is the most long-serving of the three leaders within her CofP, having been in post for over four years. However, the preponderance of dialogues between her deputy, Bob, and herself, index that this is a dominant relationship shaping roles and interactional practices within the team. In the first extract, Nicola uses a similar 'thinking aloud' technique

to Anna, but this is wholly in response to a presentation given by Bob, rather than self-generated. The technique is used in this case to resolve a problem triggered by Bob's presentation, which is to puzzle out why a particular financial target has not been met. The analysis shows that the interactional practices throughout this extract are transactional, including problem-solving and decision-making talk, instructions given to colleagues and negative evaluations of actions taken. Nicola uses virtually no relational talk in this extract with no attempt to tend to her senior colleague's 'face needs' (Brown and Levinson 1987). If Nicola's language is typical of the interactional practices used in this team's CofP, it would be described according to Holmes' (2006) model as masculinised: direct, goal-orientated and fairly confrontational.

This impression is somewhat moderated by the interactional practices performed in the second extract. While Nicola starts the sequence by using an assertive and directive style with her deputy, Bob, she also demonstrates concern for the object of her discussion – a group of casual workers who may be facing redundancy. She shows an affective orientation in her concern for the feelings of these subordinates, while achieving the transactional goal of managing their expectations (without which, this senior team might be subject to trades union complaints). From this point on in the extract, Nicola also demonstrates a range of relational practices towards Bob by co-constructing a management action to be taken with him. This is perhaps because she experiences a moment of uncertainty about revealing her feelings in response to a tough, staffing problem, indexed by her use of pausing and double-voicing ('call me old-fashioned'). It is evident that while Nicola and Bob are sparring partners in the team, there is no actual animosity between them in these extracts. From a transactional perspective, the sparring is 'nothing personal'. It could therefore be said that while Nicola indexes a fairly masculine, transactional style as a leader, she appears quite capable of using a wide linguistic repertoire within her CofP.

In the next chapter, we identify the corporate and gendered discourses prevailing within each of the six leaders' CofPs. We supplement our connotative analysis of each leader's discursive positioning in Chap. 5 with reference to insights from the interviews conducted with our participants.

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The Discursive Positioning of Women Leaders

Abstract In this chapter, we identify and analyse the wider discourses that circulate within each of the meeting contexts in order to understand some of the pressures and opportunities that each woman leader is experiencing. Using FPDA, the discourses identified include: *change and uncertainty, relational practice*, *masculinisation* and *family*, which all compete to position women leaders in powerful ways at certain moments within the meetings, but in less powerful ways at other moments. Certain institutional discourses are identified in the UK context that are not evident in the Bahraini context and vice versa. The chapter considers the reasons for this apparent difference, and analyses the competing and gendered ways in which senior women are positioned within the two cultural contexts.

Keywords Competing • Discourses • Leadership • Gender • Subject positions • Discursive shift

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we identify and analyse the corporate and gendered discourses that 'subject position' each of the Bahraini and UK leaders as they speak and interact with colleagues in senior business meetings. We will explore how these discourses work together or in competition with each

other to position and reposition the various leaders during the course of their meetings. In Chap. 6, we draw all these insights together to explore what constitutes leadership linguistic 'effectiveness' for these six women leaders.

We use Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) of a speaker's discursive positioning to ascertain the ways in which individuals move between varying positions of power within the course of a single interaction. FPDA can pinpoint exact moments when speakers shift from a relatively powerful or 'effective' subject position to a less powerful, weakened or 'ineffective' position (and vice versa). As a method, FPDA can help to evaluate the strength and effectiveness of a speaker's subject positioning within and across different discourses over the course of a speech event such as a business meeting. In addition, FPDA can index longer-term, sociolinguistic and cultural patterns such as a speaker's accustomed range of linguistic practices, their relationships with other speakers, and interlocutors' responses to their levels of competence, authority or expertise. Subject positioning can also reveal how aspects of identity such as a speaker's gender, ethnicity or professional status can shape and influence interactions according to the discourses at play within a CofP. We will evaluate the effectiveness of a leader's subject positioning in relation to how powerfully positioned across the identified discourses each speaker is seen to be.

We argue that interwoven and competing discourses are responsible for both shaping and constraining women's experiences of senior leadership, but they also provide leaders with some agency to negotiate, challenge or resist their positioning within and across given discourses. In other words, women leaders are not passively constructed by corporate and gendered discourses, but have the agency to reshape their positioning within them. If they are powerfully positioned, they may also capitalise upon these discourses as *resources* in order to enact leadership more effectively. After conducting Interactional Sociolinguistic Analysis (ISA) of the meeting extracts (see Chaps. 3 and 4), we separately identified and named a number of discourses within our two geographical contexts. The use of brackets below indicates discourses that we independently named, but later chose to conflate in order to acknowledge the overlaps between them. Within Bahrain, Al A'ali identified the following set of discourses within her three leaders' meetings:

> change and uncertainty; relational practice (feminisation); masculinisation; historical legacy (seniority); hierarchy and status; resistance to authority (hierarchy resisted); family; loyalty; professionalism; expertise.

Within the UK context, Baxter identified the following set of discourses:

> change and uncertainty; relational practice; masculinisation (command and control); historical legacy; hierarchy and status; resistance to authority; open dialogue.

In this chapter, we first discuss our theoretical and analytical basis for identifying each discourse within the interactions of the six meetings. Second, we conduct a macro, connotative analysis of the meetings to reveal how different combinations of discourses shift to position and reposition each leader in various ways. We also locate the exact moments in which discursive shifts occur, and the consequences of these significant moments upon each leader's interactions with their teams. Finally, we carry out a brief overview of the six cases, assessing whether we note any overall patterns (see Chap. 6 for a discussion of our overall insights from the studies).

IDENTIFYING THE DISCOURSES

Change and Uncertainty

All six meetings we analysed revealed that change and uncertainty were endemic within routine leadership practices. We identified the discourse of *change and uncertainty* to be where leaders are expected to fulfil the capitalist aspiration of making organisations efficient and profitable, which often involves organisation restructuring, staff changes and job losses. Leaders are discursively positioned to enact authority in complex and delicate ways so that they accomplish drastic and often unpopular changes whilst seeking to preserve trust and empathy with their colleagues and subordinates. Evidence of the discourse was found in linguistic practices such as: direct references to instances of change and uncertainty, expressions of anxiety from colleagues, and the leader's use of mitigating language (such as double-voicing) to divert attention from the topic when it became threatening to people. These practices and features are all explored in more detail in the connotative analyses below.

Relational Practice

The discourse of *relational practice* emphasises the importance of building and preserving good team relationships by demonstrating qualities such as trust, appreciation of others, overt support, and so on. *Relational practice*

was originally identified by Fletcher (2001) as having a particular association with women at work and thus, we argue, is a 'gendered discourse' (Sunderland 2004). In other words, women are *expected* to act towards others in a relational manner, but the effect of this is that, from a male hegemonic perspective, they can 'disappear' from view. This is because there are normative expectations of women to do 'relational' work, which can take considerable effort, but because of its subtlety, often goes unnoticed by senior management. However, Fletcher (1999: 123) argues that a discourse of *relational practice* is not always disempowering for women; it can also constitute a strong set of interactional resources and a way of 'pushing organizational practices beyond current norms'. Furthermore, the discourse can be a force for 'empowering others and creating allies' (Fletcher 1999: 123). The interactions within leaders' meetings show that a discourse of *relational practice* is not always disabling for women; a powerful positioning within this discourse can enable a senior woman to be a highly effective leader. The discourse is manifested by means of linguistic practices consistent with politeness such as: compliments and praise, listening sounds, mitigation and double-voicing. Supportive rather than contestive humour can also be a key feature of this type of discourse (Schnurr 2009).

Masculinisation

In an earlier study by Baxter (2003: 147), she identified a discourse of *masculinisation* as a set of ways that 'harness stereotypical constructs of masculinity such as hierarchy, order, structure, dominance, competitiveness, rivalry, assertion and goal-orientated action'. *Masculinisation* also encompasses certain ways of speaking and interacting as a leader, which are associated with transactional styles of leadership (e.g. Burns 1978; Holmes 2006; Schnurr 2009; Vinnicombe and Singh 2002). These include 'command and control' language such as monologue; 'holding the floor' in meetings; bald directives to give orders; categorical assertions to index certainty and expertise; interrupting the speech of lower status team members, unmitigated disagreement; jocular abuse; and so on. *Masculinisation* may intersect with other corporate discourses to position a leader very powerfully within that context (Baxter 2003). These include *historical legacy* (team members are less likely to challenge a leader who is also long-established in a company); *hierarchy and status* (higher status leaders are less likely to be challenged by subordinates than lower status leaders) and *expertise* (leaders who have specialist knowledge are likely to be accorded a more respectful and

compliant reception than a non-specialist). See below for fuller descriptions of these other corporate discourses.

Historical Legacy

This discourse signifies the length of service of people in an organisation; their experience of a company's procedures, processes and practices; familiarity with key people and company networks, and the accompanying sense of assurance compared to those who have more recently joined a company. Baxter (2003) found in her study of a UK dotcom company that *historical legacy* positioned managers far more powerfully than other discourses such as *expertise*. This discourse of *historical legacy* rarely operates discretely, but is interwoven with other discourses such as *loyalty* (a senior person with long service, who has been promoted by the company, is more likely to demonstrate and command loyalty); and *expertise* (a person with long service is more likely to have acquired professional and company-orientated knowledge and expertise). See below for more detail on *loyalty* and *expertise*. Factual, ethnographic evidence can index a discourse such as a leader's length of service in a company (for example, Badria, Hanan and Fatima all had 20 years of service in Bahrainco). The discourse is also manifested linguistically in the data by means of practices such as: direct reference to experience in the company, use of contesting humour indexing self-assurance in a leadership role, and so on.

Hierarchy and Status

Hierarchy and status is a discourse that leaders may draw upon or resist in relation to the seniority of their formal role within the organisational hierarchy. Their rank or grade within the hierarchy confers a certain status upon leaders with its associated rights, privileges and responsibilities. The senior leaders in our two studies either serve as members of the executive committee ('the board'), or work at a level or two below, in which case they have responsibility to carry out strategic decisions in the organisation alongside other senior people. They are also usually responsible for their own departmental team of managers with overall responsibility for day-to-day governance of people and policies. The senior women leaders in both the Bahraini and UK studies all have an 'upwards' allegiance to the board and a 'downwards' responsibility for their own team members. This discourse of *hierarchy and status* is explicitly signified through a leader's role

as Chair, line manager and perhaps, member of the executive committee. The discourse was indexed linguistically in our data through such power display practices as: the use of uninterrupted, monologic utterances, bald declaratives and directives that convey higher status and hence a superior right to speak and be heard.

Resistance to Authority

Meetings are contested spaces where authority and hierarchy are played up (Mumby 1998). They can be sites where leaders practise their authority and enjoy a fair amount of linguistic liberty; as Chairs, they have control of the 'floor', they can issue orders and instructions, and so on (Handford 2010). Yet, meetings are also sites of struggle where colleagues may choose to challenge the institution's hierarchy and authority in order to preserve or advance their own interests. Colleagues may negotiate their subject positions by means of a set of linguistic strategies such as interruption, demanding information, giving opinions (even when they are not asked for them), challenging their leaders, and so on. Yet, the degree to which colleagues are successful in this endeavour varies depending on the context; their voices are either acknowledged and heard, or silenced and marginalised. While the discourse of *resistance to hierarchy* may be closely tied to, and emerges as a reaction to the discourse of *hierarchy and status*, we have chosen to acknowledge both discourses equally because we believe that by shedding light on this often marginalised discourse, we can gain insight into the context and the type of relationship the leaders have with their colleagues and subordinates. The presence of resistant discourses often indexes the feelings of other participants in the context (colleagues, subordinates) towards the leader. Equally, the ways leaders position themselves within the resistant discourses, and whether they resist or comply with them, reflect the type of relationship they have with their colleagues and subordinates. All in all, studying resistant discourses is very important because it enhances our understanding of the context and reveals the multi-faceted aspects that compel leaders and participants to take a certain discursive positioning.

Family

The use of family metaphor and practices in corporations has been identified in a multitude of studies. Casey (1999: 156) posits that 'many companies,

from manufacturing, operations and supermarket chains, to hospitals and airline companies, promote themselves in the market place and to employees as caring, familial communities'. In his study, Alakavuklar (2009: 5) identifies a *family* discourse, which he defines as 'a set of language and practices employed in an organization in order to construct a social family-like atmosphere that is expected to be experienced by all the members'.

According to Casey (1999) and Legge (1999), what distinguishes organisations with a dominant *family* discourse is an emphasis on members' emotional well-being, bonding, social relationships, and commitment and loyalty to each other and the organisation. Therefore, collaborative, facilitative, and sometimes emotionally charged language may be highly encouraged by senior management. Also, a family-like, organisational model is considered paternalistic in the sense that the management can be perceived as parents (working for the greater good of the family) and employees as children. Consequently, through this discourse, senior management can have authority over their employees in exchange for job security and various other privileges and rewards (Casey 1999).

In Arab culture, Sidani and Thornberry (2010: 46) argue that 'attitudes and behaviours that govern interactions in groups are first learned in the family'. The behaviours are then carried out in any grouping and in communities formed outside the family, including the workplace. Therefore, personable relationships and familial environments are quite common in Arab Middle Eastern workplaces. The discourse is manifested in the data by various means including a leader's use of expressive language, which may take the form of expressions of love and affection, care, gratitude and pride, as well as expressions of negative emotion such as chidings and 'put downs'.

Another discourse that intersects and possibly branches out of *family* discourse is a *loyalty* discourse.

Loyalty

Various researchers (e.g. Casey 1999; Ryan 2011; Western 2008) consider loyalty as an element of *family* discourse, as it denotes commitment and devotion to one's family, team, or organisation. Very few studies recognise loyalty as a discourse on its own. For example, Johnson (2003: 27) identifies a *loyalty* discourse in his study of corporate law. He refers to it as a concept of devotion that is 'grounded in widely-shared cultural norms'. Demands and requirements of loyalty are likely to be context-sensitive and

differ from one organisation to another. In our research, we acknowledge the essential connection and overlap between *family* and *loyalty* discourses, yet we also consider *loyalty* to be a discourse in its own right because there are situations in Bahrain when loyalty is demanded and expected from employees, even without a strong sense of family in the specific context.

However, when both discourses (*family* and *loyalty*) are present and interacting in the same CofP such as an HR department, then this may lead to a strengthening of individuals' sense of loyalty. Sidani and Thornberry (2010: 47) state that in Arab society, loyalty is stronger among families or family-like groups: 'Whenever the person finds a conflict between a family value and another value or requirement in the workplace, family allegiance takes precedence'. *Loyalty* is indexed linguistically in our case studies by means of: direct and positive references to senior management as the higher authority, expressions of deference, and justifications of their policies and actions.

Professionalism

According to Warning (2009: 346), a discourse of *professionalism* defines what it means to be a 'professional' in an organisation. It constructs, maintains and reproduces 'the occupational characteristics to which workers are compelled to conform in the pursuit of professional identity and status'. These characteristics are subjected to various economic and social factors and vary from one organisation to the other. Values promoted by a discourse of *professionalism* often reflect wider organisational and societal practices. For example, in some corporations, to be a 'professional' is to acquire certain language practices and work behaviour such as competitiveness, entrepreneurship and commerciality (Fournier 1999). As we will see, there are 'linguistic traces' (Sunderland 2004: 7) of this discourse in the Bahraini case studies. We show that Bahrainco evidently views professionalism through a traditionally masculine lens to denote discipline, meeting deadlines, punctuality, and formality. This discourse is less easy to evidence than other discourses in our two research studies because professional behaviour and interaction is normative across all the meetings. It is only when professional boundaries are tested, as they are in Badria's case, for example, that the significance of the discourse for leadership practice is exposed.

Expertise

Expert power in an organisation derives from the need for an employee's knowledge and skills in a specific area in which she or he has been trained. This knowledge enables expert employees to have a strong understanding of any situation in their specific area of expertise, and their skills enable them to solve problems that less knowledgeable colleagues are unable to address. These experts often gain the trust and respect of their colleagues, and their opinions are listened to and highly valued. Therefore, a discourse of *expertise* privileges and empowers participants with expert opinions. According to Sprain (2015: 1), an '[e]xpertise discourse consists of a wide variety of ways in which people can position themselves as experts or draw on expertise within a given interaction'. In the Bahrainco study, this discourse intersects with the discourse of *historical legacy* as employees tend to acquire considerable expertise in contexts where they have worked for a considerable length of time. Evidence of *expertise* is indexed linguistically in our studies by means of such practices as: people asking specific colleagues for advice; the giving of advice or dispensing of knowledge; the use of technical or domain-specific lexis, and the length of time an expert speaker 'holds the floor' without interruption.

Open Dialogue

The corporate discourse of *open dialogue* was first identified in a study on the enactment of leadership in UK senior team meetings (Baxter 2003). In the company concerned, Baxter (2003: 142) noted that team members referred to this discourse directly as part of an authorised company ethos, which encouraged employees to be 'open, honest, frank' in their discussions. Indeed she found that an emphasis on 'transparency' within company culture has become increasingly valued within the mission statements of all the companies in her study. *Open dialogue* connotes a collection of values exhorting an organisation to be democratic, cooperative, self-regulating, team-spirited and free-speaking. However, such a discourse can be at odds with corporate discourses that endorse hierarchy and status, and a 'command and control' style of management and leadership. This discourse is indexed in the studies by such linguistic practices as the use of metalanguage to describe the goals of an agenda item in linguistic terms (e.g. 'this is a chance to open up a bigger debate').

FPDA: The Six Meetings

In the following analyses, we identify the *principal* discourses we have noted from the denotative analysis in Chaps. 4 and 5. In our identification of several predominant discourses circulating in each of the six CofPs, this does not rule out the possibility that traces of *other* named discourses exist, or that other analysts might identify discourses that we have failed to observe. We recognise that we may have failed to identify certain discourses because they may be so naturalised within leadership interactions that they appear routine and standard practice. This remains a challenge for future Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse analysts.

Badria (All Bahraini Analysis by Haleema Al A'Ali)

We identified four competing discourses in Badria's meeting within which she and other participants are variously positioned. These are: *hierarchy and status, resistance to authority, professionalism* and *expertise*. The meeting is also a contested space where subject positions are constantly being resisted and negotiated.

The most dominant discourse at work in the meeting is *hierarchy and status.* Badria, as Bahrainco's representative, is powerfully positioned within this discourse. As the Chair of the meeting, she has the authority to make the final decisions and control the process and outcomes of the meeting. This is linguistically realised and indexed through her command of the floor, turn-taking, and progression of the discussion. It is also evident through her linguistic practices (e.g. interruptions, asking questions, making final decisions, issuing commands and requests).

On another level, a discourse of *hierarchy and status* further works in this context to distinguish the status of the three organisations taking part in this endeavour and the linguistic liberty the representatives of these organisations (Badria from Bahrainco, Amal from SATCO, and Dr Sara from UOD) enjoy in the meeting. As I explain on p. 51, the relationship between SATCO and Bahrainco is a hierarchical one, with SATCO being the 'mother company' and having ultimate power over Bahrainco. Therefore, Amal, SATCO's representative, is positioned powerfully in the context. Similarly, Bahrainco, being the sponsor and host of the conference, has more power in this context than UOD. Therefore, the discourse of *hierarchy and status* positions Badria in an inferior position to Amal and in a superior position to Dr Sara. Badria indexes her positioning with Amal

through engaging with her in constant consultation in a way that establishes her as an unofficial co-Chair of the meeting. This co-chairing role is evident in various places in the meeting where Badria allows Amal to take the floor and respond to questions, interrogate other participants, issue orders and instructions, refuse proposals, and so on. In Extract 2, Badria and Amal join to co-construct a bald, on-record refusal to Dr Sara with utterances such as, 'whatever is going to show (.) at that day (.) it has to have SATCO's logo on it'.

During the course of the meeting, this hierarchy is indexed metalinguistically through the seamless discussion of the placing of the logos, as Badria, Amal and all the participants from Bahrainco explain the reasons behind the importance of keeping SATCO's logo ahead of Bahrainco's, and Bahrainco's logo ahead of UOD's.

In this context, Badria's powerful positioning within the discourse of *hierarchy and status* is constantly being challenged by the contesting discourse of *resistance to authority*, invoked primarily by Dr Sara who relentlessly negotiates UOD's status and her own. In Extract 1, pp. 51–52, when Badria excludes Dr Sara from the private discussion, she resists such positioning and demands to be included: 'tell us tell us please'. Yet perhaps the most notable example of such resistance is around the logo issue. Even after Badria has explained in detail the hierarchical relationship between Bahrainco and SATCO in Extract 1, Dr Sara still attempts to renegotiate UOD's subordinate positioning. In Extract 2, she proposes to place UOD's logo on top and Bahrainco's and SATCO's logos at the bottom. The discourse of *resistance to hierarchy* certainly works to disempower Badria; however, she resists this positioning using linguistic strategies varying from cooperative humour, justification, and explanation, to interruptions, withholding information, and issuing bald, on-record refusals.

The other two discourses identified in the meeting are *professionalism* and *expertise*. Badria is positioned by (and in the interview, identified with) a dominant discourse of *professionalism* which, in this context, is intertextualised with the discourse of *masculinisation* in the sense of implying discipline, punctuality, and formality. In the meeting, Dr Sara arrives late and answers her phone a few times in mid-discussion. Badria shows her discomfort at this behaviour towards the end of the meeting by using banter with Dr Sara to instruct her indirectly not to be late next time. Badria (B) also comments on this in the interview, distinguishing between Bahrainco's people and outsiders (such as Dr Sara):

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B: when it comes to discipline sure we are more disciplined we are
very disciplined (.) see for example we get annoyed from Dr Sara when
she is late when she answers her phone (.) Bahrainco's people are very
disciplined in that sense
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Badria uses the corporate 'we' to affiliate herself with Bahrainco and takes up this discourse to reduce the status of Dr Sara and her institution (UOD). There is also a discourse of *expertise* that positions Badria and others and affects their linguistic behaviour. Evidently in the meeting, Badria seeks the advice of other participants, each in their area of expertise. In Extract 1, Badria privately discusses a sensitive issue with Amal, consulting her on norms and ways of maintaining hierarchy and keeping SATCO and the Minister happy. There are numerous similar incidents in the meeting where Badria asks for Dr Sara's opinion; she also admits her lack of knowledge in certain expert areas and consults other participants in the meeting regardless of their status. Within this discourse, Dr Sara and Amal are positioned powerfully and are established as key participants in the meeting, whereas Badria is positioned relatively powerlessly as she needs to seek the expert opinion of others before she makes key decisions. However, ambiguously, her need to consult members of her team for their advice could also be interpreted as a *powerful* strategy in order to show her regard for, and trust in her subordinates.

All in all, throughout the meeting Badria is positioned powerfully as the manager and the Chair by the discourse of *hierarchy and status*. However, there are moments where other discourses are invoked resulting in observable switches in Badria's language and that of others. For instance, when the discourse of *hierarchy and status* interacts with the discourse of *professionalism* (e.g. when Dr Sara violates Bahrainco's unwritten codes of professional behaviour), Badria's positioning is empowered, and thus, she switches to a more traditionally masculine language using direct questioning, teasing and banter. Yet, there are moments in the meeting where the discourse of *expertise* is invoked by Badria when she needs an expert opinion. This discourse competes with the discourse of *hierarchy and status*, rendering Badria's power ambiguous, which then results in observable switches in her language towards a more traditionally feminine, egalitarian and sociable style. Finally, the most important and notable discursive shifts take place when the discourse of *resistance to hierarchy* is taken up by Dr Sara in her attempts to gain recognition and equal treatment for her organisation. The moments when the placement of the logos are discussed seem the most salient ones, as the

competing discourses of *hierarchy and status* and *resistance to hierarchy* turn the meeting into a contested site. This is where Dr Sara attempts to negotiate her subject positioning, yet Badria and others from Bahrainco resist that positioning. By strongly identifying with the discourse of *hierarchy and status*, Badria manages to maintain her powerful positioning and run the meeting successfully, while shifting her positioning from moment to moment as needed.

Hanan

The discourses of *hierarchy and status*, *masculinisation*, *historical legacy*, and *expertise* are all discourses that interact at times and compete at others to shape the language choices of Hanan and other participants in the meeting. Meeting and interview data have revealed that possibly the most dominant discourse in Hanan's CofP is *masculinisation*. In Bahrainco, and especially in the business and planning department, male employees are in the vast majority and utilise the traditionally masculine language practices of engineering and transaction. Although she is an engineer, Hanan is positioned less powerfully as a woman. Possibly in order to be recognised and appreciated, Hanan utilises forms of normatively masculine language (especially in critical moments where there is a possibility of missing deadlines or delay in accomplishing tasks), such as direct questioning, direct requests and jocular abuse as in the following examples: 'tell me when', 'I don't want you to die' and 'your visa is valid until 29'.

Moreover, according to the interview data, the discourse of *masculinisation* affects Hanan tremendously outside the meeting as well, as it serves to deny her promotions and opportunities. In the interview, Hanan recounts her disappointment at the lack of recognition from the management, despite her long experience and expertise, only to find out from a western employee that her gender is holding her back in this male-dominated CofP:

```
H: one of the Westerns he brought that to me (.) he said I mean er (.)
he spoke to all those Bahrainis who are higher than him (.) and he said
er (.) they don't er because you you are a female (.) they don't (.)
I mean they put some (.) cap on your er (.) advancement
```

While the discourse of *masculinisation* positions Hanan powerlessly in her career progression, the discourse of *hierarchy and status* competes

to empower Hanan in the context of the meeting. She is the head of the project and has ultimate authority in all major and minor decisions. This is evident through her command of the process and outcomes of the meeting, and is linguistically indexed in the way she opens the meeting, moves through agenda items, interrupts participants, requires explanation, issues orders and instructions, and so on.

Likewise, the discourse of *historical legacy* also competes to privilege Hanan, as she has risen through the ranks in Bahrainco to a senior position and has experienced growth and changes in the company over 20 years. Hanan makes several references to her lengthy experience in Bahrainco. These are referred to indirectly in the interviews while discussing other matters such as recounting her pioneering stories and knowledge about the company's policies on gender and diversity. Similarly, in the interview data, Hanan's colleague, Amir (A), refers to Hanan's years of experience to justify his subordinate position in this project:

```
A: and that's natural (.) she (.) she has experience more than me (.)
for example I do it some (.) in a way (.) she says ok (.) you have done
it in a right way but it's better to do it like this

A: I recently joined this er (.) supporting this system for the past
two three months so (.) I am little bit new in this field (.) er she
was looking after this for for I dunno (.) for years
```

There is also evidence of a discourse of *expertise* in the CofP of the engineering department that places expert people like Hanan at an advantage. Hanan is an expert in what she does; she has handled critical major projects ever since she joined the company. This is an indication that the discourse of *expertise* positions Hanan powerfully, especially when running projects. Hanan's expertise in major projects is evident in the data. In Extract 1, when Hanan is negotiating the message to be displayed to operators, she refers to herself as a 'system person' who knows all about specialised technical concepts such as ATG1, FAC, and so on. In the interview, Amir relates Hanan's higher status to her longer experience and expertise in the project. He further claims that in the meeting, for instance, she gets listened to not only because she is the project manager, but also because she knows best. In sum, while Hanan is occasionally positioned by the discourses of *masculinisation* and *expertise*, she is powerfully positioned by the combined discourses of *hierarchy and status*, and *historical legacy*, which sustain her authority throughout this meeting.

Fatima

In the two meeting extracts, Fatima is positioned and positions herself within six significant discourses: *change and uncertainty; relational practice; hierarchy and status; historical legacy, family* and *loyalty*. First, it is evident that Fatima is positioned by a discourse of *change and uncertainty*, indexed by her opening declaration 'your situation is critical', but also by participants' expressions of insecurity and speculations over the possible staff restructuring in Bahrainco. Located within this discourse as the bearer of corporate 'bad news', Fatima seeks to position herself within a discourse of *relational practice*, mainly indexed by her attempts to mitigate and avoid delivering this news directly by using speculative language and teasing humour (see lines 12–14 on p. 63). As we have seen, this discourse was identified by Fletcher (2001) as having a particular association with women at work: that is, women are expected to act towards others in a relational manner such that they can 'disappear' from view. However, *relational practice* can also have more empowering associations, such as when it is used proactively as a leadership resource to counter a serious threat by strengthening team relationships.

According to the latter view, Fatima appears to be empowered and even privileged by her agency within *relational practice*. In the first extract, she uses mostly relational language to mitigate the potentially negative effects of the bad news, in the form of hedges, vague language and teasing humour. Additionally, *relational practice* enables Fatima to acquire an almost parent-like identity (linked with the *family* discourse, below) with her team members, as the language she uses with her colleagues reflects a unique relationship that exceeds that of mere superior-subordinates. Her use of authority, balanced by concern over her employees' feelings, is apparent in various parts of the first extract (e.g. lines 16, 20, 28, see p. 63). Also, Fatima teases her colleagues at times, and 'spoils' them at others, as in line 15, 'we can't let you off', (see p. 63). This parent–child relationship is not one-sided; her team members seem to contribute a great deal to this liaison.

Fatima is further empowered by her multiple positioning within the discourses of *hierarchy and status* and *historical legacy*. These discourses combine to privilege promoted employees like Fatima, who have spent all their career life in Bahrainco and who have witnessed and assimilated the growth and change in the company. This discursive positioning is largely downplayed in the first extract, as Fatima uses relational language to

affiliate with her subordinates. However her authority appears to grow in the second extract when she demonstrates an almost parental firmness and authority. For instance, her use of humour and teasing towards the needy Salem (lines 12 and 14, p. 63) functions effectively to 'put him down' and 'keep him in his place', which indexes a much more authoritarian persona.

Furthermore, through enacting a mother role, Fatima also negotiates her intertextualised positioning within a *family* discourse. Among many techniques, I consider that mothers rely on unconditional love between them and their children and deploy certain linguistic strategies that, at least on the surface, appeal to their interest and future. In Extract 2, an interesting aspect of Fatima's enactment of the mother identity is apparent as she asks her team members what they would like her to get them from Japan: 'do you want me to get you anything from Japan↑' and later, 'I will get you mini Japanese'. I consider that this is a very significant moment in the meeting, in which the whole team engages in an intimate family farewell where the mother is expected to bring gifts from her travels. Yet, in Fatima's case, this is a 'business trip'. This *family* discourse empowers Fatima because it positions her powerfully among her subordinates, and offers her the privileges and the ultimate respect one would give to a mother and a caregiver.

Lastly, Fatima is positioned powerfully within, and privileged by, a dominant discourse of *loyalty*. As we explain above, this indexes the corporate expectation that all employees affiliate themselves with Bahrainco and demonstrate a strong obligation to its senior management. In the first extract, Fatima constructs and maintains the discourse of *loyalty* by identifying with members of senior management, defending and justifying their 'unpopular' decisions, and acknowledging and accepting the company's hierarchies, as for example, in lines 6 and 35 (pp. 62–63): 'the management might not agree with their view of the section'; 'Hussain knows (.) but I can share this concern'. In the second extract, Fatima transfers this expectation of loyalty to her own team in her hedged instruction about their work when she is away: 'I expect that you will all help [Ahmed] in the Centre (.) don't you go disturb him (.) give him hard time↑'.

These various prevailing discourses compete to assert Fatima's subject positioning and influence her choice of leadership language in the meeting. A discourse of *change and uncertainty* positions Fatima relatively powerlessly because, as a member of middle management, she has the tough job of delivering bad news to employees, while at the same time

maintaining their trust and confidence in her. On the other hand, the discourses of *relational practice, hierarchy and status* and *historical legacy* serve to empower Fatima as a woman leader in Bahrainco. In my view, the multiple effects of these discourses have constructed Fatima's role into a 'parent' to her subordinates, which carries both maternal and paternal elements. The maternal identity has led to expectations from Fatima's subordinates of nurturing, intimate and emotionally-charged responses. Furthermore, her use of relational language to enact leadership not only reflects her awareness of this preferred communicative code in her section, but also constructs her as an agent in the production and maintenance of these discourses. Finally, by taking up the discourses *of historical legacy* and *loyalty*, Fatima reinforces a paternal culture of hierarchy in her department, where employees are expected to pay the highest respect and unquestioning loyalty to their leader as the representative of senior management.

Anna (All UK Analysis by Judith Baxter)

In the two meeting extracts, Anna positions herself, or is positioned by, the dominant corporate discourses of *historical legacy, open dialogue* and *masculinisation*, as well as the marginalised discourse of *resistance to authority*. These are all apparent in the analysis of Anna's attempts to set up a new sub-group for the purpose of discussing business issues in strategic 'detail'.

In the first extract (see p. 78), Anna positions herself quite explicitly within *historical legacy* as a new leader to her role, in that she states that this is her 'second or third meeting'. Her sense of relative powerlessness within this discourse is conveyed throughout the first extract by her use of tentative, speculative language. She uses affective expressions such as 'I'm I'm just feeling', as well as repetitions, hesitations and false starts, which convey that she is thinking aloud, and may be uncertain about how her new team will receive her proposed ideas. If Anna had been more established in her job role, she might have proposed the idea of 'focused' meetings as a non-negotiable fact, but she invites her team to consider a major change to their meeting structure at an early stage in her relationship with them. To offset this, Anna positions herself within the discourse of *open dialogue* by apparently posing a whole series of questions for the team to answer and discuss. However, we saw in the micro-analysis that she actually denies colleagues the opportunity to enter into an open discussion by answering the questions herself. This is ironic given that the gist of her proposal is to encourage 'more [team] understanding'. There is a hint here of her

positioning within a discourse of *masculinisation* in her use of monologue to dominate 'the floor'. Be that as it may, Anna is doubly weakened in this moment by the discourses of *historical legacy* and *open dialogue*, as she has not yet developed a trusting relationship with her team, nor has she given her colleagues space on this occasion to express what they feel about her proposed idea. This creates a significant moment of disempowerment, which provokes her colleague Brian to step in and criticise her argument. His intervention causes Anna to capitulate on one aspect of her proposal.

In the second extract (see p. 80), Anna appears to have shifted from a relatively weak positioning within *historical legacy* to a stronger subject position within *masculinisation*. This is indexed by leadership language normatively associated with men that serves transactional business goals (Vinnicombe and Singh 2002). Anna has moved from sounding tentative towards her team to using a more transactional language of 'command and control'. This is illustrated by the way she interrupts colleagues on three occasions during this sequence and issues two orders. It appears that her colleagues want certain *other* issues to be openly discussed, but she cuts off their requests. She asks her colleague, Sue, a question which has the force of a directive (ll.3–4), in order to divert the team from their issues about emails and communication, and back to her agenda of getting volunteers to sign up for the proposed sub-group. While there is some light-hearted banter in this exchange, Anna's failure to achieve her agenda indicates that she may not be so powerfully positioned by her use of masculinised language. There is evidence in the extract that team members mobilise a discourse of *resistance to authority*. In line 1, Sue refers to 'normal' email practice from which she suggests Anna is deviating, and in line 6, Sue returns to the issue, despite being told by Anna not to 'take the actions now'. Liz tries to support Sue's resistant utterance but is interrupted by Anna, and the team appear complicit in their amusement at Sue's refusal to join the sub-group (line 10).

Scholars in the field of gender in organisations argue that women leaders who utilise a stereotypically masculine leadership style often cause dissatisfaction and resentment from subordinates, because leadership remains a masculine construct (e.g. Fletcher 1999; Sinclair 1998). Anna's use of masculinised, instructional language provokes a contesting response from her colleagues in both extracts. When she was interviewed, Anna was aware of the effects of her language and was quite self-critical of its use on her team, realising that her style was not going down well:

```
A: I've been in roles where I have a bit of a drive to get things done
and here I have to backtrack and allow myself to let people have a
bit more air time (.) I have to watch myself as I used to be instinc-
tively 'I'm leading (.) you are doing this this and we've only got so
many hours in the day' but it was a much more managed environment (.)
if you get them separately they will actually do something but you
almost have to say to them 'will you do this?' rather than actually
volunteering (.) there were a number of them sitting there and hoping
things would happen
```

Intriguingly, this self-perception is matched by a not particularly com-
plimentary comment about Anna's approach to leadership by Brian, the
colleague who made the only contribution in Extract 1:

```
B: she always seems to be beside the point (.) and creating this
incredibly ingenious schemes that are a lot of work for other people
that aren't really achieving anything very much (.) so she generates
all the work for other people that never seems to be very effective
in achieving this
```

This supplementary interview data adds up to an impression that Anna
is multiply weakened by her subject positioning within *historical legacy,
masculinisation*, *open dialogue* and *resistance to authority*. Perhaps because
she is relatively new to her post, she uses a closed, masculinised language
to assert her authority that fails to build relationships with her colleagues.
This use of language works to shut down opportunities for the team to
discuss their concerns openly, which in turn invokes the discourse of *resis-
tance to authority*, whereby colleagues jovially refuse to 'sign up' to her
new proposals. Anna may have excellent intentions for her team, but it
seems that her complex discursive positioning in this meeting is under-
mining her leadership goals.

Julie

In the two meeting extracts (see pp. 77–82), Julie positions herself, or is
positioned by, three significant discourses: *change and uncertainty, rela-
tional practice* and *hierarchy and status*. The 'elephant in the room' is the
marginalised discourse of *open dialogue*, which emerges only by means of
its omission and exclusion. In terms of *hierarchy and status*, I analysed the
monologic format of Julie's utterances, and her use of longer, uninter-
rupted, conversational turns than her subordinate colleagues, consistent
with her status as the leader of the team and the Chair of the meeting

(Drew and Heritage 1992). The significance of hierarchy in shaping Julie's leadership practices is explicitly referenced as a topic when Julie gives detailed descriptions of the new 'matrix' relationships between managers of different ranks (lines 3–18). Julie positions herself here through the exclusive use of the pronoun 'we' as one of the key decision-makers from the executive committee determining the restructuring process ('those are the kinds of transition batons we're going through as a Group HR leadership team and battening down'). The evidence suggests that Julie is quite powerfully positioned by *hierarchy and status*, and draws upon it to legitimate her own authority.

However, Julie's subject position as a senior leader is also complexly shaped by the interwoven discourses of *change and uncertainty* and *relational practice*. Prior to this meeting, Julie's team learnt not only that they were about to lose their leader, but also that there were to be changes across the management structure with some job roles being radically altered or lost. Positioned much less powerfully by *change and uncertainty*, Julie has to propose and defend changes on behalf of senior management, which she knows will have a negative impact on her team. To negotiate that clash of subject positions, Julie draws on a discourse of *relational practice*: she speaks in ways that sound emotionally supportive, selfless and committed to maintaining professional relationships (Fletcher 1999; Sinclair 1998). In the second extract, Julie gives compliments, positions and frames her answers in detail, uses humour and constructs hypothetical situations in order to engage her colleagues. However, much of her relational work during this extract, rather than building good relationships, appears deliberately to divert her colleagues' attention from the fact that she is *not* giving them a clear space to exchange their views. Rather than invoking the discourse of *open dialogue* (which might have been appropriate here), Julie uses relational practices that conceal the need for this. The principal effect of her leadership language is therefore *to* suppress rather than openly address her team's fears about the future.

In sum, a discourse of *hierarchy and status* formally enables Julie to construct an authoritative position for herself as a leader, but her authority is undermined by the damaging effects of the discourse of *change and uncertainty* within the interaction. We can only speculate that Julie fears that she might be confronted by critical colleagues if she were to encourage a full and frank team discussion. A *relational practice* discourse provides Julie with the resources to maintain an appearance of empathy with her team while she explains the restructuring plans. However, ultimately,

this is just a tactic to avoid a deeply powerless positioning within the almost hidden discourse of *open dialogue*, which might patently weaken her authority over her team. An impression of this was evident when Julie was interviewed immediately following the meeting:

```
J: it was always going to be a tricky meeting (.) I had prepared it to
the nth degree but no amount of preparing was going to ward off the
difficult news about me (.) the company (.) and the fact that they will
have to carry that news to their own colleagues (.) I couldn't really
sugar it but I tried to I will admit
```

One of her colleagues ('G'), who did not speak in the meeting, had this to say in an interview after the meeting about how 'effective' he felt Julie was in handling the bad news:

```
G: it always felt as if we were skirting around (.) I didn't get to
say what I wanted to say and I doubt that other people did either (.)
I wouldn't say it was a good meeting at all today as there was a lot
of pent up emotion (.) I guess Julie felt she didn't want a therapy
session
```

In sum, while empowered by her positioning within *hierarchy and status* and *relational practice*, Julie is simultaneously disempowered by her positioning within *change and uncertainty* and *open dialogue*, creating a chronic tension within her performance as a senior leader.

Nicola

In the two meeting extracts (see pp. 82–88), Nicola positions herself, or is positioned by, the dominant corporate discourses of *hierarchy and status, change and uncertainty, masculinisation* and *relational practice*. These discourses are all evident in both extracts where the discussion is dominated by the two most senior people in the meeting, Nicola and Bob, which was a feature of the meeting as a whole.

In terms of *hierarchy and status*, Nicola makes no explicit reference via metalanguage to her own status or to that of Bob, her senior colleague. This discourse is invoked primarily by means of her dominant use of language, which is normatively coded as masculine (Cameron 2006). As we saw from the micro-analysis, Nicola's sense of almost incontestable authority is indexed by her long, monologic speaking turns, her use of the exclusive first person pronoun 'I' which separates her off from her team,

and categorical assertions and unmitigated commands, all directed at Bob. Nicola's language represents a series of assertive challenges to Bob, yet he does not react either defensively or aggressively. Rather, his technique is to sidestep her challenges, at times with humour, and to avoid confrontation with his boss. The fact that Nicola is prepared to use direct, bald, on-record language with a senior colleague, and that Bob fails to take offence, indexes that she is very powerfully positioned within the discourse of *hierarchy and status*, and that this is supported, rather than undermined, by her positioning within other discourses circulating in this CofP.

Interwoven with *hierarchy and status*, is Nicola's dual positioning within the discourse of *masculinisation*. Many of the linguistic features conventionally indexing masculinisation are closely aligned with those of *hierarchy and status*, such as monologic talk, unmitigated commands, categorical assertions, direct questions, interruptions and so forth. Typical of a more masculinised style of leadership is the use of goal-orientated leadership, confrontation, command and control. This being the case, why should an analyst assume that Nicola is using a masculinised language rather than simply exercising the authority legitimated by her role as a senior leader (*hierarchy and status*)? I would suggest that these two discourses are highly intertextualised, based on gender theory that the enactment of leadership is traditionally viewed as a masculine construct (Kanter 1993; Mullany 2007). A woman using masculinised practices may well reflect that the CofP itself is masculinised (Holmes 2006). However, when a woman leader uses masculinised linguistic practices, this can throw into relief the normative view that women who 'speak like a man' are unnatural and deviant. Yet, unlike Anna's colleagues (see above), Bob does not appear to react negatively to Nicola's use of a masculinised register in response to her questions and commands. This might indicate that her use of masculinised language is seen as part of the repertoire of 'effective' leadership (Marra et al. 2006). There is evidence for this argument in the curious switch Nicola makes during the second extract from a more masculinised to a more feminised language, which highlights that a leader's linguistic practices are not defined by a single style but can range across a broad linguistic repertoire (Marra et al. [Instruction: Leave space here] 2006).

In this second extract, Nicola experiences tension as she shifts between several, competing discourses. Across both extracts, there are traces of the discourse of *change and uncertainty*, indicated by contextual references to the 'upwards' and 'downwards' pressures of managing change. As a representative of senior management, she is responsible upwards for

delivering their policies, and this is seen in her leadership actions of questioning Bob forcefully on 'wastage' and unexpectedly rising staff costs. As leader of a team positioned powerfully by *hierarchy and status*, who in turn must direct the actions of the workforce downwards, Nicola is responsible for handling staff relations that are often determined by trades' union policies. References made by both Nicola and Bob to 'last year's strikes' suggest that appointing or firing casual and permanent staff is a highly uncertain and sensitive business. Thus, Nicola's role as leader is continuously defined by this discourse of *uncertainty and change*, and inasmuch as she appears fully 'on the case', it is fair to deduce that she is powerfully positioned within this discourse. However, her overall 'effectiveness' as a leader can only be assessed by examining how powerfully she is positioned by the *other* discourses.

We have seen that Nicola is indeed powerfully positioned by the discourses of *hierarchy and status* and *masculinisation*, and this obvious authority continues into the second extract. This is indexed by her micromanaging, instructional statements to colleagues to send out 'a firm holding statement' (lines 2–3) to casual workers whose jobs may be under threat. However, Nicola's linguistic practices suddenly undergo a shift from a top-down, masculinised style to one that indicates understanding and empathy with the staff affected. She uses metalanguage to describe how the staff might be feeling, expresses the message they might send, and uses double-voicing ('call me old-fashioned') to ward off the threat that she might be viewed as inappropriately sentimental for a leader. As the micro-analysis shows, Nicola's language becomes more uncertain, hesitant and apologetic, indexing many of the features of a so-called 'woman's language' (Lakoff 1975). She looks for agreement from Bob, repeating the tag question 'yeah?', and there is an increased use of the qualifier 'I think'. These linguistic indices suggest a shift from a relatively powerful positioning within *masculinisation* to a less powerful positioning within the discourse of *relational practice*. I consider this positioning to be less powerful because Nicola is experiencing linguistic discomfort in having revealed her feelings here. Her use of double-voicing implies the normative view that today's senior managers are not expected to empathise overly with employees' feelings in a world of financial cutbacks and staff restructuring. In short, Nicola has exposed, in her own view, a perceived weakness in her discursive positioning as a leader. Her discomfort suggests that this positioning might not happen too regularly. However, the fact that Bob responds supportively to her concerns might signify that her

capacity to shift between different discourses in order to utilise them as resources is a leadership feature that is admired by colleagues. When she was interviewed, Nicola described her approach to leadership as follows:

```
N: um (.) it's (.) it's all about people feeling that their contribu-
tions are valued and um (.) that they know where the challenge is (.)
that they know where they need to be better (.) more focused and er
for that to discover revelations themselves not to have it pointed out
all the time you know
```

Nicola's comment about her leadership approach is endorsed by Helen, a senior member of the team who did not speak during the two extracts:

```
H: she's a very balanced objective person she doesn't manage through
emotion um (.) so I've seen examples where she is instantly reflective
where she'll say you know that's a good point fair challenge and you
can see her thinking it through (.) occasionally she will shut people
down she will close them down quite quickly:: but often she's (.) very
shrewd in the way that she does it
```

The connotative analysis of these two utterances indicates that Nicola is positioned strongly across the diversity of discourses prevailing in the CofP of the senior team meeting, and is able to harness her subject positioning for effective leadership. One self-perceived weakness in subject positioning was observed in Nicola's response to the news that some casual workers might lose their jobs, but judging by the reaction of her senior colleague, Bob, this apparently powerless positioning was seen as an index of Nicola's effectiveness as a leader in her colleague's view.

In the next chapter, we will look at leadership effectiveness in more detail.

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Gender and an 'Effective' Language of Leadership

Abstract This chapter discusses the insights from our research and their significance for theorists and practitioners. In both research contexts, there are common elements in the discursive 'subject positioning' of senior women leaders, largely to do with increasingly globalised expectations about how senior people are supposed to lead within international companies. Women leaders in both contexts are constrained by their subject positioning as women in a men's world. Yet, they are able to accomplish new forms of leadership that are indexed by particular linguistic and discursive acts. While there are some differences between women within the *same* cultural context, there are also differences *across* the two cultural contexts. These are partly accounted for by variation in cultural norms and values, but never amount to distinct cultural behaviours or stereotypes. Finally, the chapter considers what constitutes 'effective' leadership within and across the research contexts.

Keywords Leadership • Effectiveness • Gendered discourses

INTRODUCTION

This book began with several interrelated aims to which we now return.

First, we wanted to learn more about how senior women perform leadership within Bahraini and UK corporate contexts. We asked, 'What versions

of leadership in business life do senior women perform?' and 'What does leadership "look and sound like" for each women leader within her given community of practice (CofP)?'.

Second, we wondered, 'What influence, if any, "working in a Bahraini company" or "working in a UK company" might have in relation to women's performance of leadership within their CofP?'. To answer this, we asked how corporate and gendered discourses in their particular CofPs interact with each woman's performance of leadership. This question led us to identify the range of corporate discourses circulating within each leader's local context, some of which were gendered, and to explore how each leader positioned themselves or were positioned by these discourses.

Third, in a research culture that increasingly requires scholars to produce 'impact' upon research participants, this in turn leads to the question of leadership 'effectiveness'. We asked whether it is possible to define effectiveness within and across different geographical and sociocultural contexts, and whether businesses can learn from our insights.

Finally, we ask whether the positioning of women leaders by gendered discourses in large companies is a reason why they still find it difficult to progress to senior positions. If so, what insights can this book contribute to bring about change?

Throughout the book, we have based our discussion on the premise that business leadership continues to be one professional domain where gender differentiation on the basis of assumed biological sex is evident and clearly prejudicial to the social category of women. This is therefore a context where gender as a binary distinction 'is made relevant' to scholarly discussion (Kitzinger 2007), because it has both material and discursive effects in terms of the presence/absence of women as leaders and professionals at senior management level (Baxter 2014). We have used the terms 'men' and 'women' in this book to denote fluid, social constructs rather than essentialist categories.

We now discuss each of the four aims above, presenting the insights we have gained from the two studies, as well as their implications for future research and practice.

Aim 1: Versions of Women's Leadership

Unsurprisingly, we discovered that there are many versions of how women 'do leadership'; there is no single way in which women leaders look and sound. This is very much in line with the discursive and performative approach to women's leadership (see Chap. 1), which argues that women

have access to multiple versions of leadership. However, these versions are regulated by contextual factors such as the gendered nature of the CofP in which people work (Holmes 2006), the discourses circulating in those contexts (Mullany 2007), and the larger gendered 'culture' of the organisation in which they work (Baxter 2010).

In Chaps. 3 and 4, we analysed our six case studies by applying Holmes's (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire model. This is predicated on the view that any CofP, such as a regular senior team meeting, is gendered, and that leaders quickly adapt to the gendered nature of that CofP, selecting interactional strategies from the repertoire as appropriate. In line with Holmes, we found that women leaders in both geographical contexts ranged across the linguistic repertoire, drawing on normatively masculine interactional strategies to achieve transactional goals and normatively feminine strategies to achieve relational goals. However, in the Bahrainco context, two of the three women gravitated towards more 'masculine' leadership practices. Research in workplaces in the Arabian Gulf reports similar findings. When studying the leadership styles of Qatari senior women, Almuftah (2010: 102) concluded that rules in the Qatari workplaces 'have been constructed around the male norm', and that women need to adapt to the use of stereotypically 'male working styles and attitudes' if they seek recognition and success in their workplaces. This was true of Hanan who used normatively masculine approaches to manage a large project, and to assert her authority decisively over a team of male subordinates. However, this was not Hanan's only strategic approach. She also made use of normatively feminine linguistic strategies (such as hedged and mitigated language, consulting and listening to expert opinion, negotiating). Furthermore, she also used relational strategies to downplay and share her power in her significant collaboration with subordinate, Amir, who was the operational manager of the project. While Hanan's masculinised approach predominated, this was always tempered by her use of relational strategies.

The evidence that senior women are quite comfortable in using a masculinised approach was manifested in the UK context by Nicola, MD of a large UK logistics company, who publicly held a senior male executive, Bob, to account for his increased expenditure on casual workers in the company. While there were moments of interactive humour, her linguistic practices were relentlessly confrontational, assertive and directive. Nicola made very little attempt to 'save Bob's face' (Brown and Levinson 1987), and yet her direct speech was received with good grace. In Nicola's case, there was evidence that her linguistic practices indexed the norms of

her masculine CofP, where caring for the welfare of casual workers was deemed 'old-fashioned'.

In contrast, Fatima's case study showed a leader who prioritised relational aspects of the workplace in order to create an intimate and familial working environment, support her team members' emotional well-being and 'face needs', and strengthen the sense of belonging to Bahrainco. Fatima's leadership language was strongly egalitarian, most notably in its attempts to reduce distance between herself and her team by issuing compliments, expressing appreciation and sharing power and information. However, this use of relational language was subtly manipulated to serve her ultimate purpose of achieving business goals. Fatima also inflected her sympathetic dealing with her team with a finely wrought sense of humour, occasionally at her male colleagues' expense. This indexed a strong sense of confidence, experience and knowledge of her team, and an expectation of loyalty from them.

Of all the six leaders, just one leader could range evenly across the leadership linguistic repertoire to achieve a 'balance' between meeting transactional and relational goals. In our view, Badria was the most adept at utilising diverse interactional resources to work with Dr Sara and Amal, two senior women from other institutions. She alternated between deploying assertive language such as interrupting, withholding information, issuing direct orders, decisions and refusals in order to exercise her authority over the meeting and to represent the best interests of Bahrainco, and using facilitative language to preserve good relationships with her two senior colleagues. As the two other women were not regular team members, this meeting was not an established CofP. So Badria's facility to range across the leadership linguistic repertoire proved an essential asset in establishing a sound working environment in which competing interests could be resolved. Badria showed an exceptional awareness of the linguistic resources available to her, using them skilfully to enact leadership, and without jeopardising her status in the company or upsetting senior management.

The 'skilfulness' of leaders such as Fatima, Nicola and Badria to use differently gendered practices as a set of leadership resources, and to switch between these practices as they deemed necessary, indicates that one day women leaders might be able to escape the entrapment of a 'gendered' repertoire. Such a repertoire becomes de-gendered or irrelevant when leaders of all genders can take up the most appropriate resources as they see fit. This is likely to take some time yet, as we explore in the next section.

Aim 2: Contexts and Discourses

In order to consider what influence, if any, the Bahrainco and UK work contexts might have in relation to women leaders' leadership practices, we identified and analysed the range of discourses circulating within each leader's CofP. We then looked at how each leader was positioned, or positioned herself, within competing discourses to enact leadership with her team. We wanted to know whether the particular combination of discourses enabled her to maintain and strengthen her position as a competent and authoritative leader, or whether the shifting configuration of discourses in her meeting worked to unsettle and undermine the way she performed leadership.

From a 'national culture', contextual perspective (Holliday 2013: 163), Bahraini women leaders appear to face greater barriers to their career progression than their UK counterparts (see Chap. 1). This view is based on the insight that there are more cultural and religious pressures upon the former to remain within the private, domestic sphere, or to work in lower status jobs rather than to pursue high profile careers. As we saw in Chap. 1, Bahraini women occupy far fewer senior positions than UK women, and so it is feasible to argue that they experience greater challenges to become leaders. On this basis, we would expect to see some of these challenges, pressures and differences in opportunity reflected and mediated through the discourses identified in our two contexts. However our approach to culture during this book has been much more in line with Holliday's (2013: 163) notion of 'small culture formation', which is to study 'elements of the workings of culture in which social action can be observed'. We also applied the CofP model, now widely used in sociolinguistic research. Our insights are therefore case and context-specific, not seeking to generalise to wider populations, and just hinting at the rich possibilities for wider comparison if larger-scale or more intensive research were to be carried out. Furthermore, any comparisons we do draw are made with caution as our studies were conducted independently and our identification of discourses were separately conducted, although the names of closely similar discourses were collated (see Chap. 5, p. 94).

We saw that every leader operated within the smaller CofP of a regular business meeting that was a microcosm of the wider CofP of their department (e.g. Business and Planning, Engineering, Human Resources [HR]). Each CofP was identifiable by a distinctive set of interwoven discourses, which interacted with the leadership language and professional identities

of all the team members. Sunderland (2004: 193) refers to this concept as 'discoursal diversity' in organisations. We found that while there were certain discourses in common across the six settings, there were some clear differences *within* the two groups of nationally defined leaders and *across* these two groups. We summarise the key findings as follows (see Appendix 2):

- Both Bahrainco and UK leaders are positioned by the discourses of *masculinisation, hierarchy and status*, and to a lesser extent, *historical legacy* (rather more in Bahrain) and *change and uncertainty* (rather more in the UK). This patterning suggests that corporate leadership is still strongly associated with the traditional norms of masculinity, hierarchy, status, seniority and historical legacy across both cultural settings. The widespread use by women of a dominant, transactional language where masculinised discourses circulate, indexes that female leaders are still obliged to adapt and 'fit into' business cultures and contexts that historically represent the interests of men. These discourses do *not* tend to encourage egalitarian, people-centred, shared and delegated ways of speaking, interacting and behaving to conduct business (although feminist linguists have noted some gradual change here, see Cameron 2000). The discourse of *change and uncertainty* pervades two of the UK-based businesses in our study, and emerges as a key managerial responsibility for UK leaders, Julie and Nicola. The discourse also emerges as an issue for Bahrainco leader, Fatima (see below). All three leaders are required to manage the threat of staff restructuring and job losses with their teams.
- There are distinctive discourses that pertain to Bahraini women leaders but not to UK leaders, and vice versa. While Al A'ali's study showed that Bahrainco women are positioned by such discourses as *family, loyalty, professionalism* and *expertise*, Baxter's UK study found less evidence of this discursive positioning of UK women leaders. This comparative finding indicates that Bahrainco conceptualises leadership not as a pragmatic, financial transaction with employees, but as a collective, moral and affective relationship developed over a number of years. In contrast, Baxter's study found that *open dialogue* was a dominant or silenced discourse in two of her case studies, but this discourse was not indexed in Al A'ali's study. Arguably, it is not indexed because the discourse of *hierarchy and status* is so strong

in Arab society that corporate decisions are usually made by people in top management without consulting lower-ranking employees. It could also be argued that discourses such as *professionalism* and *expertise,* are likely to occur routinely within most businesses, but might express themselves in different, culturally-specific ways. This is a clear example of where much more extensive research is called for, using greater amounts of meeting data that focus on uncovering naturalised discourses.

- The culturally-specific discourses of *family* and *loyalty* in the Bahraini context *do* suggest that distinctive corporate value systems and ideologies are influential. The use of family metaphor and practices in corporations has been explored in various studies (e.g. Barker 1993; Goodman 1986; Kunda 1992; Ouchi 1981; Peters and Waterman 1984; Safizadeh 1994; Tjosvold 1991). Such a trend in discursive practices fosters certain qualities in employees, such as commitment and loyalty to the organisation, and provides a community to which they can belong and in which they can feel secure. It also constructs an organisational culture that is hierarchical and paternalistic where management and superiors are viewed as parents working for the greater good of the family (Casey 1999; Legge 1999). Alakavuklar (2009) argues that the family metaphor in corporations could be regarded as a discourse promoting a belief that all employees are part of one big family, where relationships between members are based on mutual love and commitment. This links to certain core values of Arab Islamic societies, which consider family to be at the heart of all institutions: political, business, educational and so on. Alakavuklar (ibid) suggests that male senior managers are conceptualised not just as parents but as father figures in companies, while women managers (often less senior) are viewed as 'mothers' who manage their subordinates (their 'children'). Al A'ali argues in Chap. 5 that the discourses of *historical legacy, relational practice* and *loyalty* interact to construct Fatima as a 'parent' and indeed, as a 'mother', creating a family-like atmosphere in the CofP of her meeting. There is no similar pattern in the three UK case studies.

- Overall, our analyses indicate that Bahrainco leaders are more *powerfully* positioned than the UK leaders across the various discourses identified in their CofPs. Badria, Hanan and Fatima were assessed in Chap. 5 as being more often powerfully positioned across the identified discourses than powerlessly positioned, although they all

experience small moments of loss of power during the course of their meetings. All three leaders were deemed to be consistently powerful across multiple discourses identified in their settings. This is in comparison to the UK leaders, where Nicola is the only one of the three who maintains a powerful positioning as a competent and authoritative leader (except for a slight wavering in her dominant demeanour on the matter of casual workers who might be sacked). In contrast, Anna is powerlessly positioned across most of the identified discourses (*masculinisation, historical legacy, resistance to authority,* and *open dialogue*), as she struggles to maintain an impression of competence and authority in the face of testing colleagues.

- Within and across all the CofPs we studied, there is considerable heterogeneity in the configuration of discourses we identified, and the extent to which they positioned a leader as powerful. For example, within Bahrainco, where intra-company comparisons can be made more readily, certain discourses in common (e.g. *masculinisation, hierarchy and status, historical legacy, loyalty*) interacted in quite different ways depending on the leader, their team, the purpose of the meeting and the nature of the CofP. To illustrate, while the discourse of *loyalty* is intertextualised with, and tends to support *hierarchy and status,* this was not consistently the case. While *loyalty* worked in favour of Fatima, arguably, it undermined Hanan, who, in the interview data, repeatedly showed her resistance to, and refusal to accept the value of this discourse. In Badria's case, although a discourse of *loyalty* could not be directly identified because of her shifting stance between the interview and the meeting, Badria made considerable linguistic effort to maintain the status and hierarchical relations between Bahrainco and SATCO in the meeting. This indicated some degree of loyalty to her company, their rules and hierarchies. Whether reproducing or resisting dominant discourses in their CofPs, each woman leader showed unique dispositions towards these discourses through their constant shifting of subject positions in order to perform different aspects of leadership.

Despite this heterogeneity across the data, we ask, 'Why are the three Bahrainco women leaders more powerfully positioned within their leadership discourses than their UK counterparts?' To answer this, we now compare the cases of Fatima and Julie in more detail. Both leaders were HR directors managing exactly the same business issue of staff 'restructuring'.

In research literature, HR is shown to be more of a women's domain compared to other professions (Bierema 2001; Howell et al. 2002; Metcalfe 2007), although clearly there are exceptions. Similarly, the HR departments in both Fatima and Julie's cases were CofPs in which women were more numerous, and linguistic strategies stereotypically associated with women were highly valued. Fatima and Julie both had the challenging job of delivering bad news about company restructuring to employees, while at the same time maintaining trust, confidence and empathy with their teams. Equally, both women were powerfully positioned within the discourse of *hierarchy and status,* which endowed them both with the formal authority to deliver bad news as representatives of senior management. As senior women within HR, both were positioned strongly within the discourse of *relational practice.* Fletcher (1999: 123) proposes that interactional strategies compatible with *relational practice* can become a force for 'empowering others and creating allies'. Both Julie and Fatima harnessed this discourse as a resource. Julie utilised a range of relational practices to divert attention from the 'real' purpose of the company restructuring, which was to create a number of job losses. However, she seemed disempowered by her positioning, as she failed to confront the concerns of her colleagues and prevent them from engaging in direct and open dialogue. This could index her avoidance as a team leader of using such a direct linguistic approach. Fatima, on the other hand, utilised relational practices in a way that further confirmed and strengthened her authority as a leader within her CofP. Her actions of balancing very direct speaking with teasing humour, playfulness, yet apparent concern for colleagues, might suggest that she had developed a more robust, loyal and long-lasting relationship with her team than Julie had.

Fatima's advantageous location as a leader may also be explained by her strong positioning within the discourse of *loyalty*, which is further strengthened by her positioning within *historical legacy*. Contextually, she had been in her role for over 20 years, and this sense of established command over her subordinates was indexed by her use of familial language: unapologetic teasing, telling off, complimenting and promise of gifts on her side. In contrast, there was no evidence of a discourse of *loyalty* within Julie's context. She was doubly weakened by her positioning within *change and uncertainty*, which together, may have undermined her attempts to maintain strong, effective relationships with colleagues, as both she and her people were constantly moving from one post to another.

As we have seen, both leaders are positioned firmly within *hierarchy and status*, implying a loyalty upwards to senior management; however there is a possible difference in cultural attitudes here. Julie positioned herself as a member of the top, senior executive team and as its representative on her own HR team, thus giving the impression that her company was more overtly democratic than Fatima's. However it also emerged that decisions were made covertly by higher management in the UK company, and did not involve subordinates. Fatima's organisation had none of this pretence: higher management decisions were made autocratically and founded on unquestioning colleague loyalty, just as a son or daughter is expected to obey a father or mother. However illiberal to western eyes, Fatima's required position of loyalty served to strengthen rather than weaken her discursive positioning as a leader by ensuring that her own team would be equally loyal, respectful and compliant.

It seems then, that one strong reason why Bahrainco women leaders may be more powerfully positioned within leadership discourses than their UK counterparts, is that the company's core values encouraged employee adoption of a collective, familial identity where employees work for the overall good of the company rather than their personal interests. Thus, the discourse of *family* in the Bahrainco workplace also serves to support women leaders' roles and responsibilities in times of change and uncertainty. Julie was simply unable to fall back on such long-established ties of long service and the organisation-as-family that supported and sustained Fatima in her deployment of authority balanced by relational practices.

We conclude that the two cultural contexts in our studies do have some influence in relation to the way women enact leadership. Middle Eastern women leaders may not be as disadvantaged by their gender as some research literature claims. In the case of Bahrainco, at least, people are supported by strong organisational structures and ideologies that reward duty, belonging, loyalty, tradition, familial relationships, and placing the needs of the company above personal career aspirations. Alakavuklar (2009: 1) describes the *family* discourse as 'paradoxical', explaining that some organisations promote this discourse to disguise 'the contradictions and the socio-political structure of the organizations that emerge from the nature-of-organization'; for example, to hide and legitimise hierarchical distinctions, the presence of the glass ceiling, and other practices that privilege and empower some employees over others. While this corporate context might be perceived as deeply paternalistic and gender-divided, it does appear to protect Bahrainco women leaders with long service from the insecurities

experienced by UK leaders such as of ever-changing teams, random management decisions, shifting job roles, and peremptory job losses.

Aim 3: Assessing the 'Linguistic Effectiveness' of Women Leaders

In this section, we consider how possible it is to define linguistic effectiveness within and across different geographical and sociocultural leadership contexts, and whether, potentially, business practitioners can learn from our insights. From this discussion, we draw out several different definitions of effectiveness, then reassess these definitions from a feminist linguistic perspective. Holmes and Vine (2016), define 'effective leadership' in linguistic terms as follows:

> Consistent communicative performance which results in acceptable outcomes for the organisation (transactional/task-orientated goals) and maintains harmony within the team or community of practice (relational/people-orientated goals).

To supplement this definition, we draw upon the discourse-analytical approaches used in this book as a diagnostic tool for assessing leadership linguistic 'effectiveness', which have combined both deductive and inductive methods (see Chap. 2).

First, using the deductive lens of the leadership linguistic repertoire model, Marra, Schnurr and Holmes (2006: 256) state that, 'effective leadership involves achieving a balance between getting the work done and keeping people happy'. They recognise that this 'delicate balance is complicated further by the need to take account of the different contexts in which [women leaders] interact and demonstrate this integration'. Two examples of 'context' the authors give are the gendered nature of the CofP, and the relative 'publicness' of the meeting in which leaders perform. Evidence from Marra et al.'s own research shows that a 'skilful' woman leader can vary from speaking in more goal-orientated and direct ways in normatively masculine CofPs to speaking in more cooperative and indirect ways in more feminised ones. There is some evidence in our own studies that the most 'skilful' leaders can transcend the concept of a 'gendered style' altogether (i.e. being able to decouple the association between being goal-orientated with being 'masculinised', and being people-orientated with being 'femininised'). The leaders in our studies utilise language as

a flexible set of resources according to need and context. They do not appear to be tied or trapped by the need to negotiate an approved gender identity alongside a skilful leadership identity, as Marra et al. (2006) argue.

For example, Badria showed an exceptional agency to exploit the interactional resources available to her, using them 'skilfully' to produce clear outcomes without jeopardising her status in the company or upsetting the senior women from other institutions. Arguably, she was the only leader of the six who transcended the concept of a gendered style altogether. We can argue this because Badria was not working within an established CofP, nor a discernibly gendered one, and there was no obvious pattern to her use of linguistic resources in a one-off meeting where women dominated, other than the imperative to use the most appropriate resources to accomplish her diverse objectives. In other cases, women leaders appeared actively to exploit the gendered potential of leadership resources for the wider range of outcomes these can bring, as Fatima managed to do. From applying the lens of Holmes's (2006) leadership linguistic repertoire to our data, our first definition of 'effective' leadership is therefore:

(1) *Leaders harness the linguistic repertoire as a set of gendered resources according to need and context. At their best, leaders can transcend the repertoire's links with gender identity altogether.*

The repertoire serves to describe linguistic practices that encapsulate *what* women do with language to be effective with their teams. However, the model does not explain *why* some women are capable of being effective and others less so, except by the essentialist explanation that they have innate or acquired 'skilfulness' in harnessing their choice of interactional strategies for different needs. The model also places a strong emphasis on strategies as *gendered* and governed by the principle of gendered CofPs. In short, leaders have to negotiate meetings as cultural spaces inhabited by differently inflected, gendered and professional identities. Holmes' (2006) emphasis is upon leaders' individual abilities and skill-sets as moderated by the CofP they inhabit, but she does not highlight the issue of discursive power.

Our second analytical lens, FPDA foregrounds the role of discursive power in order to explain why some speakers seem more 'effective' within a context than others. FPDA identifies the discourses by which leaders are positioned, the dominant ideologies that inform such discourses, and the ways these compete or combine during the course of a speech event to

empower or disempower people. According to FPDA, *gendered* discourses may emerge in these settings, but they are not necessarily constitutive of all leadership practices (Baxter 2003). The construct of gender is just one of many manifestations of power that operate within discursive settings. In the six case studies, those leaders who were generally powerful in their positioning appeared to have established loyal and respectful relationships with their colleagues, a strong sense of authority in decision-making, and to display exceptional competence in achieving business outcomes. Furthermore, where discourses complement each other, they can effectively *enhance* the powerfulness of a leader's positioning. We saw this in Fatima's case, where the usually competing discourses of *family, loyalty, relational practice, historical legacy* and *hierarchy and status*, all combined to reflect and construct the strongly relational but purposeful CofP of her HR department, positioning her as consistently powerful and therefore, we would argue, as an effective leader. This was also true of Nicola, who was positioned powerfully across leadership discourses associated with strong team relationships and open discussion (*relational practice, open dialogue*), as well as discourses linked to authority and task fulfilment (*masculinisation, hierarchy and status, expertise*). Nicola also retained a privileged discursive positioning across evidently gendered discourses such as *masculinisation*, and discourses that were not evidently gendered such as *uncertainty and change*. The effect of this overall positioning was that her most senior team member, Bob, did not take offence when she confronted him in direct and authoritative ways, and was equally respectful of her when she expressed a more relational concern for casual workers' future wellbeing. Nicola's agency to traverse competing discourses without losing power suggests a basis for adjudging her an effective leader. From applying the lens of FPDA on 'discursive power and shift' to our data, our second definition of 'effective' leadership is:

(2) *Leaders occupy a consistently powerful subject positioning within and across the majority of leadership discourses identified in a senior team meeting.*

Closely related to this, another key principle of FPDA is that no individual is ever uniformly powerful or powerless, and thus, a momentary discursive shift within a meeting may have a dramatic effect on a leader's standing. A speaker may be discursively positioned as very powerful in one moment, but may shift to a weak positioning in the next. Our FPDA

analysis revealed that certain women leaders were less resilient than others in shifting between one discursive positioning to another without substantially losing power. Such leaders appeared almost instantly to lose power and an attendant sense of authority in the eyes of their colleagues. This happened to Anna when she shifted from an apparently strong position within *masculinisation* to a much weaker position when confronted by her team's utilisation of the discourse of *resistance to authority*. On the other hand, Nicola was able to weather her transition from the discourse of *masculinisation* to a slightly less powerful positioning within *relational practice,* during which she struggled to reconcile her gentler leadership stance with management expectations of tough leadership. Her momentary failure to recover indicated that she herself was trapped within the masculinised value system of the company, where tough decision-making is privileged over *relational practice*. However, Nicola did recover and was shown appreciation by her senior male colleague for this recovery.

This evidence leads us to our third definition of 'effective' leadership based on FPDA criteria:

(3) *Leaders negotiate moments of discursive shift so that they do not lose but retain a powerful subject positioning across competing and conflicting discourses.*

In defining a leader's effectiveness in this way, we have so far drawn upon the *poststructuralist* aspects of FPDA (Baxter 2003) that analyse findings from a functional, provisional and non-critical perspective. The *feminist* dimension of FPDA brings a focused, critical lens to the shifting discursive positioning of speakers. Can an understanding of subject positioning help feminist linguists and the leaders themselves to contest discourses that ultimately suppress women's voices and co-opt them into reinforcing masculinist practices? Can such an understanding be transformative for women who aspire to progress in their careers?

Aim 4: Gender and the Performance of Leadership

In this final section, we discuss whether women's actual language use and their positioning within corporate and gendered discourses ultimately constrain the ways they perform leadership, and constitute a reason why many women struggle to achieve senior positions in corporations. To address this aim, we reconsider each of our definitions of 'effectiveness' from the

previous section, and ask whether these definitions are themselves gendered in that they assume that leadership effectiveness occupies a gender-neutral, 'professional' space. From a feminist linguistic perspective, would our three definitions apply equally to women and men leaders?

The first definition (see p. 130) *could* be to the disadvantage of senior women because it assumes that there are no discursive constraints upon women's agency to traverse the linguistic spectrum at will. Even though we saw how Bahrainco leader, Badria, manifested extraordinary versatility in her own practices, there are many contextual constraints upon women leaders in general, some of which are gendered. We suggest that the gendered dimension of a leader's CofP could work either in her favour or against her. In her favour, CofPs can offer a 'safe haven' for leaders whose preferred linguistic practices are consistent with its gendered dimension. We saw how Fatima's discursive positioning was strengthened by her place within a normatively feminised CofP. A CofP may also provide a supportive environment in which women leaders can explore the wider use of interactional strategies with which they are less familiar. A gendered CofP could work *against* a woman leader if she fails to adapt quickly enough to its norms, and thus finds herself using the 'wrong' interactional strategies, or is uncomfortable with using the expected strategies. This was this case with Anna, who attempted to deploy masculinised, transactional strategies in a CofP habituated to open dialogue and relational practice. As a consequence, she encountered non-compliance and resistance from her new team. Conversely, Hanan stated in her interview how she resented having to use masculinised interactional strategies with her team, and consciously chose to gravitate towards more relational practices, which were inconsistent with the normative corporate practices of Bahrainco.

Why would men not face the same pressure to adapt to a gendered CofP as women? One explanation we offer, regarded as a classic phenomenon (e.g. Halford and Leonard 2001; Holmes 2006; Kanter 1993), is that women leaders continue to experience the 'double-bind' in many business contexts (Kanter 1993; Schnurr 2009). That is, if they are overly direct, authoritative and competitive, they may be viewed as being too tough for a woman. A range of negative English language terms exist to describe the more masculinised woman leader, such as 'scary', 'mean', 'bossy' and 'bullying'. There are Arabic equivalents for these terms, such as '*Mukhifa; Ka'anha rayyal*': 'She is scary, like a man!' Yet if women are viewed as overly 'sharing and caring', they may be seen as possessing insufficient authority and power to be an effective leader. Women therefore face

a greater challenge than men to regulate and fine-tune what they say and how they say it, which can often take the form of 'double-voicing' (Baxter 2014). Double-voicing represents the significant, hidden efforts women leaders devote to achieving a fine balance between appearing neither too normatively masculine nor too feminine, but instead locating their leadership performances within an apparently gender-neutral, professional space. The skilfulness for women is therefore not just in their versatile *use* of the leadership linguistic repertoire, nor in the apparent ability to transcend a gender identity, but in *hiding* the fact of its use, and the fact that it is gendered. Perhaps an index of a woman leader's effectiveness should not be her capacity to *hide* her negotiation of the double-bind but her courage in exposing it to public view, so that its distorting effects upon her leadership language is open to critique?

If we revisit our first definition (see p. 130) of leadership linguistic effectiveness from a feminist linguistic perspective, particularly in relation to women leaders, it could be reworded as follows.

Redefinition (1)

> *Leaders have the agency to make explicit how the double bind can shape discursive practices during team meetings.*

In practical terms, this might mean that a leader uses double-voicing to reveal (rather than hide) the effect of the double bind on her leadership practices. In a previous study (Baxter 2014) observed a woman leader who was highly conscious that she was considered a 'tough cookie' by her predominantly male team. After a particularly strenuous discussion with them, she used the words: 'I understand what you are saying (.) it is not that I am not listening or anything like that but I have to do what I see.' In this comment, she communicates to her male colleagues that she is conscious of having to steer a careful line between being responsive to their needs, as expected of a woman, but also being tough and decisive as expected of a leader. Her use of double-voicing also communicates to her colleagues the ambivalent position in which she as a women leader finds herself.

In terms of our second definition of leadership linguistic effectiveness (see p. 131), we have questioned the underlying essentialist notion that a woman has an individual 'ability' or 'skilfulness' to achieve certain outcomes. An FPDA perspective, in contrast, invites analysts to consider the influences upon speakers of wider cultural forces acting through discourses and discursive practices. Different types of organisation privilege

particular sets of discourses and discursive practices. Baxter (2010), building on Halford and Leonard (2001), argues that all corporations are gendered but that most long-established organisations fall within two types: *male-dominated* in which men occupy the majority of leadership roles and women the administrative, support roles; and *gender-divided*, where women and men are assigned job roles along stereotypically gendered lines (e.g. Operations for men; Human Resources for women). The third type, the *gender-multiple* organisation is generally newer, rarer, features 'start ups' and is run by younger people who have usually been co-educated (Baxter 2010). Within the first two types of organisation, it is unsurprising that the majority of corporate discourses represent stereotypically masculine norms and values such as tradition, status, hierarchy, legacy, expertise and competitiveness. Increasingly there are more organisations that endorse gender-multiple value systems such as egalitarianism, gender equality, emotional intelligence, collegiality, relational practices and open dialogue (Sealy 2010).

Our study of Bahrainco shows how a company can straddle two sets of gendered organisation for its own hegemonic purposes, and this is illustrated through the discourse of *family*. This discourse simultaneously incorporates the values of fatherhood and patriarchy, representing the male-dominated organisation, as well as the values of personal relationships and intimacy, to represent the gender-divided organisation (i.e. men as fathers and figures of authority; women as mothers, carers and support staff). Women leaders are therefore less likely than men in leadership contexts to be positioned powerfully across discourses that uphold the values of a masculine business world. Despite this, the Bahrainco women in our study were trailblazers in rising through the ranks and managing their teams effectively despite the hybrid, male-dominated, gender-differentiated company culture. However, their experiences show that even the most senior women are disadvantaged by corporate discourses that privilege men. Women in the Bahrainco study are seen to invest significant linguistic work (Baxter 2010, 2014) to compensate for their relatively weakened subject positions. Our evidence that Badria appeared to transcend her normative, gendered positioning does not mean that all women can achieve this. What is needed, we would argue, is a raised awareness of the ways in which corporate discourses continue to construct and maintain gendered organisations, which ultimately constrain the ways women perform leadership, and constitute a reason why many women struggle to achieve senior positions in corporations. Leaders who are part

of the gendered corporate system need to be able to distance themselves from it by articulating exactly how dominant value systems, expressed as discourses, position and reposition people in unequal ways through daily linguistic interactions. Thus, our second re-definition of leadership effectiveness from a feminist linguistic perspective, might be:

Redefinition (2)

Leaders demonstrate an awareness of the gendered discourses in which they and others are routinely positioned, and provide a space for themselves and their colleagues to voice and challenge the effects of gendered discursive positioning upon their professional lives.

In a couple of the interviews, we learnt from leaders about how they silenced their own voices in various contexts. For example, Badria made references to the male-dominated, traditionally masculinised culture of Bahrainco's management, where use of aggressive language (even towards one's superior) was necessary to climb the professional ladder. She expressed her personal resistance to such positioning and her preference for taking up a much more collegiate role with her subordinates as a contesting stance to senior management, as indicated here:

```
B:  (.) I will have [my team] be at comfort (.) I want them to listen
    (.) I will deal with them the way I deal with my children (.) If
    I want to give an advice to my boy (.) if I want them to be the
    recipient yes I will do that (.)……… I mean it's not fair to impose
    Bahrainco's way of doing things on them (.) it's unfair it's unfair
```

This insight that Badria had been resisting her positioning by masculinised discourses throughout her career indexes how linguistically repressed some senior women have learnt to be. Her decision to express her views on resistance within the safe, private environment of a one-to-one interview indicates how women's voices are being silenced because they would be seen as disloyal by their organisations if they were to express subversive opinions publicly, and they may choose out of self-protection to censor their own opinions. It may well be that in day-to-day life, senior women contribute to the reproduction of the very corporate discourses that work to undermine them. The purpose of this second redefinition is to propose that thoughts stated in the relative privacy of a one-to-one conversation are even more valuable in the forum of a leadership meeting. An effective leader, in our view, is one who opens up debate about issues that people usually dare not name.

Closely aligned to this is our third definition of leadership effectiveness (see p. 132 above), that is, managing discursive shifts without substantive loss of power. In previous studies, Baxter (2003, 2010) found that both men and women can experience loss of power when they shift from one discursive position to another. This supports the argument of this book that different aspects of leaders' identities come to the fore as they shift from one discursive positioning to another according to their age, class, ethnicity, profession, level of expertise, status, and so on. Despite our 'strategic essentialist' act of categorising gendered beings as women and men, we stated in Chap. 2 that gender is not always the most salient factor in determining powerful or powerless positioning, and these other aspects often come into play. For example, Baxter (2003) observed how male leaders were disempowered by other men for lacking historical legacy and experience in the company, or for showing insufficient specialist expertise. It was in these moments of discursive shift where power for these male leaders was often lost. So in our view, why might women still be *more* likely to lose power than men in these moments of discursive shift?

We suggest that discursive shifts are moments when women leaders are likely to experience uncertainty, tension or struggle between their different discursive positions. As the majority of hegemonic discourses interweave to enhance the power of masculinised norms within male-dominated communities, the sense of preserving a convincing professional 'self' (Davies and Harré 1990) to colleagues is most likely to be tested and exposed as false when a senior woman shifts from one discourse to another. As in Nicola's case, women may try especially hard to fit into this corporate culture, and deliberately suppress more relational aspects of their identities in order not to appear weak. Nicola had apparently learnt to fulfil the corporate expectation of being a tough, no-nonsense leader, ready to hire and fire. In an androcentric business world, a male leader making a similar shift is already naturalised as a tough leader, but by shifting to the use of relational practices, might play on his versatile positioning as both tough *and* able to take up the new 'softer' skill-set of being 'emotionally intelligent' as needed (e.g. Cameron 2000: 135). Nicola did not demonstrate an equivalent confidence that she could shift towards the use of relational practices without compromising her leadership reputation for tough-mindedness.

Thus our reworded third definition of an effective leader from a feminist linguistic perspective is:

Redefinition (3)

> *Leaders draw their team's attention to shifts in their discursive position-*
> *ing as it happens and when it is important, then give their team space to*
> *discuss the significance of those shifts for opening up or closing down the*
> *actions that women in particular are permitted to perform.*

So, if we take the case of Nicola, instead of her saying 'call me old-fashioned' to censor herself for shifting from an authoritative to a sympathetic leadership stance in relation to the job losses of a group of casual workers, she might have said:

> As a leader, I think we need to balance the concerns of the people with the concerns of management, which seem to be opposed here. I see this as a strength not a weakness. However I fear I may be judged as weak by senior management if I pay too much attention to the people issue. What do the rest of you think?

This would be a risky strategy here but it would open up questions about the demands on leaders generally within a tough business world, and how such demands intersect with conflicting expectations about how senior women and men manage people and perform leadership.

Finally, without corporate willpower and leadership development programmes offering strategies to challenge and change gendered discourses and practices, junior and middle-ranking women will struggle to follow the examples of the six exceptional women in our case studies. We are keenly aware that much of the critical metalanguage used in this book such as 'discourses', 'discursive practices', 'shifts', 'powerful' and 'powerless subject positioning', are *not* part of practitioner vocabulary, although equivalent terms like 'business culture', 'company values', 'trust', 'empowerment', and 'preferred futures' are. There is an enormous gap between the metalanguage and constructs of linguistic scholarship and those of the practitioners we work with. Baxter's experience of working with leaders has enabled her to introduce some of these terms to these senior people and explain how they relate to business concepts by giving practical examples through case studies. Anecdotally, she has found leaders to be very responsive to the new linguistic concepts, but she does not underestimate the challenges of disseminating these insights more widely. As a trial, she has set up a website for women business leaders in Birmingham, UK, where some of these ideas are presented in practical, bite-sized form (see Baxter (2015) for website).

And Finally

At a time when there is a global lack of women at senior management level, our conclusion about the ways in which women leaders enact leadership is a positive one. Women leaders have to work harder than men to negotiate complex leadership practices that must be approved by higher management and their subordinates. The women in both regions are venturing into the unknown and potentially creating new versions of leadership, albeit with differing cultural inflections. For example, UK leaders have routinely to negotiate chronic change and uncertainty in contrast with their Bahrainco counterparts, who can depend on loyalty, family and long service. Surprisingly, Bahrainco leaders have more support structures from their organisation to conduct their leadership goals than UK leaders do, but these structures remain patriarchal. Despite the constraints in both contexts, all women show extraordinary linguistic effectiveness in managing their teams within a turbulent business world that continues to remain inhospitable to female leaders. By understanding what constitutes linguistic effectiveness, aspiring women could not only help themselves but also help more junior women to rise up the ranks. We suggest that leaders could benefit from leadership training to increase their understanding of how discursive positioning empowers and disempowers certain individuals in team meetings and other CofP contexts. However there is an enormous gap between the metalanguage and constructs of linguistic scholarship and those of the practitioners we work with. Women in both Bahrain and the UK often fail to express resistance to masculinised discourses that work to undermine them, and so they unwittingly collude in ensuring their future subjugation. In the new world of research 'impact', scholars are now in a position to contribute to practitioner-based, problem-solving research and dissemination that may help people to challenge gendered barriers to leadership through a finer understanding of the daily language they use. This is where we believe the future focus of research in this field should be.

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Appendix 1: Transcription Conventions

Most of the transcription conventions we have used in our extracts are based on Jefferson's (2004) transcription method for Conversation Analysis (see below). However, Al A'ali has adapted some parts owing to the nature of her data (e.g. code-switching instances). In transcribing code-switching data, she has followed the traditions of Bailey (2000) and Cashman (2000) by providing the original text and following it with the translations in bold and mid-script so that readers can have better access to the conversations and mid-turn switches. For this purpose, she has numbered the turns rather than the lines in order to avoid confusion in distinguishing between actual utterance and translation.

Transcription Key

(Paralanguage)	Non-verbal sounds and actions
1, 2	Line numbering
A, B, C	Name of speaker (anonymised and abbreviated)
Word	Translated talk
((word))	Transcriber's comment on what happened
(word)	Transcriber's guess at what have been said

(continued)

(…)	Unclear talk
(–)	Omitted talk
(.)	Minimal pause
(2), (2.5)	Example of timed pauses
↑word, word↓	Rising and falling of intonation
<u>WORD</u>	High volume, loud
°word°	Low volume, attenuated speech
[word	Overlapping talk
[word	
=word	Latching, simultaneous talk
=word	
wor-	Sharp cut-off
Wo:rd	Prolonged sound
£word£	Smiley voice, humorous tone

Appendix 2: Charting Each Leader's Discursive Positioning

	Key:	Badria	Hanan	Fatima	Anna	Julie	Nicola	Total
	S = Strong	*S = 4*	*S = 3*	*S = 5*	*W = 4*	*S = 2*	*S = 3*	
	W = Weak	*W = 1*				*W = 2*		
1	Change and uncertainty	–	–	S	–	W	S	S = 2 W = 1
3	Relational practice	S	–	S	–	S	–	S = 3
4	Masculinisation	S	S	–	W	–	S	S = 3 W = 1
5	Historical legacy	–	S	S	W	–	–	S = 2 W = 1
6	Hierarchy and status	S	–	–	–	S	S	S = 3
7	Resistance to (the leader's) authority	–	–	–	W	–	–	W = 2
8	Family	–	–	S	–	–	–	S = 1
9	Loyalty	–	–	S	–	–	–	S = 1
10	Professionalism	S	–	–	–	–	–	S = 1
11	Expertise	W	S	–	–	–	–	S = 1 W = 1
12	Open dialogue	–	–	–	W	W	–	W = 2

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