

## MASTER'S THESIS

### On the gender-related use of the particles 'ho' and 'wo' in Cantonese

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**On the Gender-related use of the particles  
'*ho*' and '*wo*' in Cantonese.**

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## ABSTRACT

A corpus-based, qualitative study was conducted to examine gender differences in the use of the two particles *ho.35* and *wo.33* in colloquial spoken Cantonese. The corpus is approximately 10 hours of recorded Cantonese radio phone-in talk shows and naturally-occurring conversations among native Cantonese speakers. Based on Robin Lakoff's observations on 'women's language', the features of *ho.35* and *wo.33* utterances were analyzed at three levels: (a) epistemic qualities of certainty (and assertiveness); (b) pragmatic effects instrumental in communicative strategies (such as reducing assertions which mitigates requests or facilitates turns) (c) the resulting pattern of a scale of negative and positive politeness strategies.

It was found that both men and women used *ho.35* and *wo.33* in their speech but women use them more frequently and differently from men. Some of the features of 'women language' could be found in the use of the particles such as tentative way of speaking, high pitch, vowel lengthening. However, it was suggested that men and women use different sets of communicative strategies. The features in women speech did not reflect the inferiority of women or their lack of confidence but they use different strategies for conversational interaction.

## 摘 要

本論文採用語料庫取向和定性研究法，研究男女兩性在使用口語廣東話裡的兩個助詞呵(Ho.35)和喎(Wo.33)的差異。本論文的語料庫是約十小時的談話錄音，主要蒐集廣東話電台來電節目和以廣東話為母語人士的日常對話。根據萊科夫(Robin Lakoff)對「女性語言」的觀察，本論文以三個層次分析呵和喎句子的語言特質：(a) 肯定性的認知情態語特點；(b) 語用效果在溝通策略（例如減輕肯定語氣以緩和請求或引起語言轉接）中所起的作用；(c) 正面和負面禮貌策略所引起的結果模式。

研究發現男女兩性均使用助詞呵和喎，但女性使用較多，並且與男性不同。在使用該兩個助詞時，有部份「女性言語」的特點在女性話語中出現，如不肯定的談話方式、高音調和元音延長。不過，本論文指出男女兩性均使用不同的溝通策略，這些女性說話特點並不反映女性處於較低級的地位或反映她們沒有自信心，而是因她們在交談中使用不同的溝通策略之故。

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