In her book *De-gendering Gendered Occupations: Analysing Professional Discourse*, Joanne McDowell closely investigates linguistic practices used in gendered workplaces (e.g. primary education and healthcare professions). The highlights of this book are: (i) its comprehensive range of topics (including elder caring discourse, nursing discourse and teaching discourse), (ii) the investigation of authentic data and (iii) the use of various analytic approaches.

The book consists of nine chapters. Chapter 1 presents how language is used in the workplace and how it helps to *perform* a professional identity, especially as regards men's linguistic behaviour in 'women' jobs. This is followed by focus on the caring profession, and more specifically on male healthcare providers (Chapters 2 to 5). Chapter 2 analyses how two male caregivers enact multiple aspects of their identity (e.g. professional, gender and ethnic identities); an important finding is that small talk and humour, which have been thought to pertain to a feminine style in language, are frequently used by the men investigated. Chapter 3 investigates how Malawian male healthcare providers construct and enact their professional identities in the antenatal care context. The detailed examination suggests that 'being a qualified healthcare supplier has very little to do with
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biologically being a man or a woman’ (56), and this is in line with the notion that language can be used, and is indeed used, to reflect professional identity rather than (exclusively or solely) gender identity. Chapters 4 and 5 present detailed analyses of male nurses’ interactions. The former identifies two discourses permeating the workplace: ‘patient care discourse’ and ‘colleague care discourse’ (75). The latter further delves into the nursing professional identity by thoroughly examining male and female nurses’ talk in feedback meetings. The findings show that some linguistic strategies are used to construct ingroup status as well as a professional nurse identity that is proper to this workplace.

The second part (Chapters 6 to 9) focuses on the work of teachers and speech and language therapists. Chapter 6 examines discursive classroom strategies used by one Vietnamese male teacher, while Chapter 8 explores linguistic disciplining strategies and Chapter 9 investigates negative politeness strategies. A common finding shared by these three chapters is that achieving certain workplace objectives means deploying gendered linguistic aspects (either feminine or masculine) regardless of the gender of the person. For example, Chapter 6 explores how some male teachers use linguistic resources traditionally thought to be feminine (e.g. expressing personal feeling and using humour) when constructing professional identities. Chapter 7 focuses on speech and language therapists’ discourse, and has significant implications for presenting the debate over the Speech and Language Therapy profession (referred to as SLT) in relation to the broader issue of gendered professions. For instance, the participants, whether SLT students or SLTs themselves, all assume that SLT is ‘women’s work’ as women were described as having an innate and superior ability to care for, and communicate with, others.

The strengths of this book lie in two aspects. First, the datasets presented here are selected from different geographic locations and cultures, including both developed and developing countries across Europe, Africa and Asia. The inclusion of non-Western data has the power to counteract the hegemony of Western-centred research and to help enhance the decolonisation of knowledge (Racine and Petrucka 2011). Furthermore, in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the analysis, the author adopts various types of empirical data, such as spoken interaction in the workplace, interviews and focus groups. Indeed, particularly important is the adoption of participatory research methods for collecting spoken workplace interaction data. Specifically, the data are self-recorded by the nursing community participants themselves. In this way, nursing community members have been actively involved in the research process; similarly, ethnographic material formed other parts of the data. Second, various analytic and theoretical approaches are adopted in different chapters, such as
Conversation Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Iterative Thematic Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. The multidisciplinary analytic frameworks draw on both micro-linguistic (e.g. personal pronouns, tag questions) and macro-social information (e.g. meanings attached to the nursing profession). This is valuable as it helps other researchers interested in exploring potential insights into speakers’ discursive behaviours (such as giving advice in doing a caring profession or classroom disciplining) devise similar research designs. By reading this volume, other researchers can delve into the understanding of linguistic aspects in what are considered gendered professions, and come to embrace a fine-grained examination of linguistic strategies and their connection to professional identities.

Overall, this book provides an excellent opportunity for students and researchers to gain insight into linguistic analysis of gender and occupation. It is of great interest for scholars in the fields of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and gender studies. More importantly, it contributes to the existing literature that worked to change common-thought and biased understandings of professions from a fixed gendered perspective, instead challenging these prevailing hegemonic norms.

Reference