Analysing Advising Dialogue from a Feminist Perspective: Gendered Talk, Powerless Speech or Emotional Labour?

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Abstract

Adopting a feminist perspective, this exploratory and empirically based study of face-to-face advising dialogue will put into question two related aspects of advising that have seldom been discussed in the literature on advising: the gendered dimension and the psychological support. Based on the general and rarely discussed assumption that women's speech is more emotional and best suited for establishing and maintaining more equal relationships than men's speech, and on the fact that many language learning advisors in the world are women, this study examines the ways in which female and male advisors working in different educational contexts verbally establish a relationship where a learner's autonomy can emerge. The preliminary results suggest that psychological support is provided through a wide range of verbal strategies and that gender seems less significant than work context to explain individual differences.

Keywords: ALL, powerless speech, feminine and masculine talk, emotional labour

In France women seem to be over-represented in the profession of language learning advisor (LLA). As far as the researchers know, there are no official figures to back up this assertion and the researchers draw this conclusion from their direct knowledge and experience of the field. For instance, in Nancy, at the university of Lorraine, there are at the present time around 150 language teachers and only eight women and two men are identified as trained and in practice LLAs; in the private self-access language centre where the researchers collected a part of their data, five women and only one man have worked as advisors; as a final example, at an Engineer's school near Paris where the researchers are involved to train future advisors, the trainees are six women and one man[1]. This seems logical as most LLAs were primarily trained as language teachers, a profession where women predominate. In

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[1] Previous research on another session of advisors' training has confirmed this tendency. See Bailly, Guély, E., and Ciekanski (2013).

France they represent more than 80% of language school and university teachers[2]. One possible implication of this reality is the stereotypification of the job of advising in language learning (ALL) as a feminine profession, leading to a possible gender wage gap, as it has been clearly established that feminine work is generally less paid than masculine work. ALL is also an occupation that stands between pedagogical work and service work, often implying a face-to-face relationship with the public, and requiring specific interactional skills and sometimes emotional management, especially in private language schools where learners are also customers. This could be a problem for LLAs as there is a possibility that these interactional skills and emotional work (Hochschild, 1983), like displaying positive emotions, smiling, being empathetic, might not be recognised as actual work by employers, emotional management and interaction skills being stereotyped as "natural" competences for women.

Based on some theoretical congruence between descriptions of advising talk and of what is known since Lakoff (1975) as "women's talk", this study aims at examining some verbal strategies of male and female LLAs to analyse to what extent they relate or not to some stereotyped features of woman's talk, such as emotionality, indirectness, support and listening.

Literature Review

Men and women's talk

Although there is wide empirical evidence that biological sexes have no direct influence on speech practices, and that sexed identities are rather co-constructed and re-constructed via verbal and non-verbal performances in ways that may vary under different circumstances (Bailly, 2009), a certain trend of research in language and gender has highlighted the existence of strong stereotypes about the ways men and women talk (see below: Holmes & Stubbe (2003), Table 1, and Talbot (2003), Table 2). Women's talk is usually perceived as more emotional, more supportive but also more hesitant, or more insecure than men's talk (Lakoff, 1975).

Table 1. "Widely-Cited Features of "Feminine" and "Masculine" Interactional Style" (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 574):

[2] This information was found in the Personnel Report of the French Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2012-2013, p. 24.

Feminine	Masculine
Indirect	Direct
Conciliatory	Confrontational
Facilitative	Competitive
Collaborative	Autonomous
Minor contribution (in public)	Dominates (public) talking time
Supportive feedback	Aggressive interruptions
Person/process-oriented	Task/outcome-oriented
Affectively oriented	Referentially oriented

Table 2. The Binary Oppositions "Which are Supposed to Characterise Women's and Men's Different Styles of Talk (Talbot, 2003 p. 475):

Women	Men
Sympathy	Problem-solving
Rapport	Report
Listening	Lecturing
Private	Public
Connection	Status
Supportive	Oppositional
Intimacy	Independence"

Both these studies stress the fact that such simplifications do not account for the many possible sources of variability in discourse other than sex, such as age, class, sociological and ethnic back-ground and status. Nevertheless, many research studies on men and women in interaction have confirmed that such features are usually labelled as "feminine" or "masculine" by research participants, and that this pattern is particularly remarkable in work contexts (cf. Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). It also quite clearly appears that these so-called

masculine and feminine speech features perfectly match traditional male (power and authority) and female (care and nurturance) roles.

The researchers' attention was attracted by the fact that some of these features have also been used to describe advisors' discourse (Gremmo, 1995), in particular: indirectness (so as not to impose one's view upon learners); listening (so that learners have time to think and speak about their learning experience) and supporting (in order to help learners to maintain their motivation).

Powerless speech

The features of perceived-as-female speech presented above, in particular those supposed to convey insecurity, have been re-conceptualised as powerless speech i.e. speech which conveys social insecurity and asymmetrical power (Erickson, Lind, Johnson, & O'Barr, 1978). "Powerless talk (…) is tentative, uncertain speech which characterises speakers as powerless and submissive" (Johnson, 1987, p. 168). Johnson (1987, p. 169) mentions the use of hedges and qualifiers, hesitation forms, 'You knows', tag questions, deictic phrases and disclaimers, or forms that "indicate uncertainty and lack of commitment to a position". Powerless speech is used to display deference and shares features with face work (Goffman, 1955) and verbal politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Powerless speech is seen as less successful than powerful speech at establishing individual power in a relationship or an institution. As LLAs generally tend to avoid establishing their own power in the relationship, and, on the contrary, try to establish a symmetrical relationship with learners so that autonomy can emerge from the dialogue, there is a possibility that some of the linguistic markers of powerless speech mentioned above would be used by advisors in order to enhance learner's empowerment. In this case, powerless speech could reveal a successful tool employed to support other's power or empowerment, and if so could need to be renamed, as suggests Fragale (2006), or at least re-conceptualised.

Emotional labour

Hochschild (1983) addresses the question of emotion in service professions. She labels the emotional part of service professions 'emotional labour' and defines it as "induc[ing] or suppress[ing] feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (1983, p. 7). More recent research has linked the ability to impact others through emotional expression to 'emotional intelligence'. Mayer and Salovey (1997)

conceptualise emotional intelligence by describing four different constitutive abilities, among which two seem particularly relevant as regards advising practice: 'perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion'; and 'reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth'.

MacDonald and Sirianni (1996) describe the "emotional proletariat" as the service workers who perform face-to-face or voice-to-voice service work, but who have no control over the 'feeling rules' that guide their emotional labour. As these service positions (e.g. waiter, receptionist, shop assistant) are mostly occupied by women, emotional labour becomes a real issue for women more than for men.

To summarise, the concept of emotional labour explains how emotion can be both expected of individuals and integrated into their professional environment. In the particular case of advisors working in private centres where learners are also clients, it may be argued that advisors' work conveys a service dimension, and thus emotional competence. On an intrapersonal level, the competence in influencing emotional behaviours of others can be integrated in a more general competence to deal with emotion. These two approaches constitute a framework that enables to take into account both the expectations put on LLAs and the skills they need to meet these expectations. It is however important to note that these constructs do not by themselves do justice to the complexity of communication during advising sessions. Other variables of behaviour such as personality traits, cognitive capacity, or physical condition may also play their part. Therefore, emotional labour and emotional intelligence might be seen as two variables that may influence the advising process without necessarily defining it.

The Present Research

Research questions

The present research is mainly exploratory and aims at defining a methodology that proves robust enough to be applied to a large set of data. The researchers were interested in an analysis of the ways in which LLAs' talk draws on perceived-as-gendered verbal resources and strategies and/or powerless speech linguistic markers. As a result, the following research questions were created in reference to the theories of women's talk, powerless speech and emotional work presented above.

1. Is advisors' discourse indirect, is it supportive and do advisors listen to learners?

2. Are linguistic markers of powerless speech present in the advisors' speech and what are their functions?

3. What evidence could be found to support the hypothesis that doing advising is also doing emotional work?

Methodology

The research draws on a set of data of 94 face-to-face advising sessions collected over a long period of time (several years), containing 500 000 words. The corpus extracted from this database for this research consists of the digital recordings and transcripts of four series of individual advising sessions that were led in two different educational contexts. One is a private language centre in Paris and the other is the University of Lorraine.

The LLAs are three different women and one man, which is roughly representative of the distribution of sex in the complete data base (out of 94, 81 advising sessions are performed by a female advisors, and 13 by a male advisor). Two of the women are around thirty years old, one is around fifty years old, and the man is around sixty years old. Two of the women, the youngest ones, work at a private language centre where advising could be at least partly seen as service work, the learners being as well clients as argued before. The other woman and the man work at the university. Three sources of potential variation have thus been identified: firstly, the sex of advisors; secondly, the age of advisors (junior or senior); and thirdly, the difference in work settings (i.e. private versus public). As regards experience in advising practice, the junior advisors experienced an intense activity in a short period of time (around thirty advising sessions each week for one year) whereas the senior advisors had more years of practice (twenty to thirty years) but with less intensity (thirty advising sessions each year). The selected learners are all adult males, aged between forty-five and fifty, to avoid possible biases due to differences in age or sex of the learners. For this study, only LLAs' discourse has been examined. Interactional aspects of the advisor-learner dialogue will be studied in a second phase.

The analysed sample consists of four advising sessions of 30 to 60 minutes long. The first sessions of each serial were left out of the corpus because of their specific status in the series. These first sessions are mainly focused on the presentation of the self-study organisation, and consequently, advisors are less likely to use either supportive or indirect speech. Among the remaining sessions, one session per advisor was randomly selected.

To identify, in the corpus, the occurrences of linguistic features and markers that are most frequently associated, in the literature mentioned above, with feminine talk, powerless speech and emotionality, the researchers drawing on grounded theory (Paillé, 1994) combined a qualitative human approach (reading the transcripts and listening to recordings individually and collectively) and a quantitative computer based approach (using automatic search functions in Excel and Word). Finally, collectively again, those examples were analysed and discussed before validation.

Data Analysis and Results

Among the features of perceived-as-feminine talk presented earlier, the researchers selected three components that also relate to the Rogerian tradition of psychological counselling on which ALL practice is most frequently based (Mynard & Thornton, 2012): indirectness, support, and listening.

Indirectness

The researchers decided to look for two face-threatening acts (FTA) (Brown & Levinson, 1987), orders and disagreements, to analyse whether these acts are softened (powerless or feminine speech) or not (powerful or masculine speech). Observing the indirect aspect of the LLAs verbal strategies is also interesting in respect of the non-directive principle present in the Rogerian person-centred approach. By avoiding giving a solution to learners' questions and rather striving to help them through their own decision process, the LLA is theoretically deprived of the possibility of producing direct speech. These observations were then an occasion to compare expected practice of advising with real practice of advising.

The classification of softeners that was kept for the study is based on Kerbrat-Orecchioni's work on conversation and talk-in-interaction analysis (1996). According to her, there are two types of softening strategies. The first one (*procédés substitutifs* or replacement means) consists of replacing a FTA by a less threatening act (for instance, a question instead of a criticism; an understatement instead of a blunt statement). The second softening strategy consists in accompanying the FTA with various types of hedges (cf. Powerless speech section above).

Example 1: softened order[3]

    A: *et là <u>on</u> en a <u>peut-être</u> quelques-uns qu'<u>on</u> <<u>pourra</u> observer*

    A: and here <u>maybe</u> <u>we</u> have some that <u>we could </u>observe

       In this example, the softeners are underlined. They are mainly modals ('maybe', 'could') and depersonalisation ('we' instead of 'you'). They enable the advisor to enunciate a suggestion rather than a direct instruction and thus to minimise the potential threat of orders.

Example 2: softened direct disagreement

    L: *je veux je veux améliorer mon vocabulaire je regarde les les deux sites qu'on a vu le restaurant des trucs comme ça*
    L: I want I want to improve my vocabulary I look at the the two websites that we saw the restaurant things like that
    A: *hum hum hum <u>mais</u> <u>d'accord</u> je regarde <u>mais</u> est-ce que tu mémorises est-ce que*
    A: hm hm hm <u>but</u> <u>all right</u> I look <u>but</u> do you memorise do you
    L: *ouais hum*
    L: yeah hm
    A: *<u>est-ce que tu vois j'ai j'ai peur que</u> ça reste encore <u>un petit peu</u> ben en surface en ce moment <u>tu vois</u> je regarde <u>mais</u> il y a des moments <u>où il faut se dire</u> j'apprends [rire]*
    A: <u>do you you know I'm I'm afraid</u> that it still stays <u>a little bit</u> well on the surface at the moment <u>you know</u> I look <u>but</u> there are time when <u>one should tell oneself</u> I learn

       In this example, 'but', - in double underscore, appears three times. 'But' is here an opposition marker that indicates some sort of disagreement from the part of advisor on the learner's choice of activity. To soften the potential threat of the disagreement, she uses various types of hedges, in simple underline in the excerpt: interrogative forms (''do you'), minimiser ('a little bit'), 'You knows', 'I'm afraid', depersonalisation ('one should tell oneself', instead of 'you should') and laughter.

       In the corpus (made of four advising sessions) the researchers found a total of 50 softened orders and only four non-softened orders; they also found a total of 15 disagreements, of which 13 are softened. So, in LLA's discourse, orders and disagreements are present, but are generally expressed in a softened and non or less threatening way. Tables 3 and 4 below present the distribution of those speech acts for each advisor. F1 and F2 are the junior female advisors working at a private centre, and F3 and M1 are the female and male senior adviser working at the university.

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[3] A stands for advisor, and L for learner. All examples from the data are provided in the original French with an English translation from the researchers.

Table 3. Proportion of Softeners Per Order Per Advisor

	F1	**F2**	**F3**	**M1**
Number of occurrences of orders	25	16	1	8
Number of occurrences of softeners	82	50	4	34
Average of softeners per occurrence of order	3.3	3.1	4	4.25

Table 4. Proportion of Softeners Per Disagreement Per Advisor

	F1	**F2**	**F3**	**M1**
Number of occurrences of disagreements	5	3	3	2
Number of occurrences of softeners	25	11	7	4
Average of softeners per occurrence of disagreement	5	3.6	2.3	2

On average, each order is softened by 3.6 softeners, and each disagreement is softened by 3.9 softeners. This result makes it clear that when the LLAs soften FTAs, they do so by using a high number of softeners for each FTA, in other words, they do a lot of face work (Goffman, 1955).

Comparing age and work setting, results in Table 3 indicate a tendency of F3 and M1 to use fewer orders but to soften them more than F1 and F2, and results in Table 4 indicate an opposite tendency for disagreements, which are less softened by F3 and M1. These results might suggest that in private work settings, advisors provide more suggestions (softened orders) during a session than in public settings. Regarding disagreements, the results show that F1 and F2 tend to soften more their disagreements than F3 and M1, which could be as well an effect of age (F1 and F2 are younger that their learners) or of work setting. This could mean that F3 and M1 are more assertive when they disagree, which might be a mark of confidence in their own expertise linked to their long time experience as senior advisors. Or it might mean that the advisors at the private centre are being more polite because their learners

are older than them, and also because they are clients, whereas at the French university they are not considered this way.

Regarding gender, results show no significant difference in the use of FTAs and softened FTAs. It can be noted that M1 (male senior advisor in public work setting) is the one who uses the more softeners per order, which does not confirm the stereotype of masculine greater assertiveness. As for disagreements, M1 is the one who makes the least disagreements of all but the difference is not significant. Combining results about orders and disagreements, F3 appears as the advisor with the most direct style speech, again in contradiction with the women's talk stereotype of indirectness. So, at the moment and from this limited sample it cannot be affirmed that sex of the advisor can predict the level of indirectness in advising. To put it in other words, in the practice of advising, the advisor's identity seems to 'cover' the sexed identity.

Support

The presence of support strategies in LLAs' speech was expected by researchers, as it has been documented in the scientific literature. For instance, Gremmo (1995) and Bailly (1995) mentioned the occasional need for the learners to be reassured on their performance and on the advancement of their learning process. This psychological task can be linked with the notion of emotional labour mentioned earlier.

One problem with the notion of support in the women's talk theory is that it is not clearly illustrated by linguistic markers. So, one of the tasks the researchers had to undertake was to identity speech acts that could function as support markers. This was done by reading through the corpus and using the audio recordings in case of uncertainty or ambiguity. This work was undertaken first individually, then collectively in an attempt to reduce the risks of over-interpretation. The results of the analysis are presented in the table 5.

Table 5. Support Strategies Observed in the Corpus

Type of support strategies generated from the data	LLAs acts	Examples, (translated from French data by the researchers)
1. Valuing results and knowledge	Valuing learner's work by describing good results or by underlining a new competence acquired by the learner	"you did well now you can introduce yourself without any problem"

2. Minimising failure	Reducing the impact of a failure or reinterpreting the situation to the learner's advantage	"you did well in all the other activities and this one was not that important"
3. Generalisation (of a problem, a habit)	Replacing the activity in a more objective framework in order to prevent the learner from a negative psychological evaluation	"we have to set objectives for your first interview with a native speaker if you know what you are going to say, you won't be afraid to go anymore"
4. Emphasising the difficulty of a particular task	Pointing out the specific difficulty of a task in order to explain an actual or a possible trouble for the learner	"It was a very difficult text containing a rather specific and technical vocabulary"
5. Depersonalisation of failure or difficulty	Sharing responsibility for failure or difficulty, or generalising it to a group of people, seeking to ensure that the learner is not negatively evaluating her or his own performance	"that pronunciation issue can be found in most French speakers of English"
6. Giving incentives	Pushing the learner into engaging in an activity	"I am sure you can finish this activity"

The LLAs use various strategies in order to diminish negative appraisals of the context as well as to enhance motivation and positive assessments. The researchers identified 6 strategies used by advisors to convey support, and analysed the verbal acts for each of those strategies. Once these strategies were identified and agreed upon, the researchers quantified their occurrences in each advisor's discourse, as shown in table 6 below.

Table 6. Number and Type of Support Strategies Per Advisor.

	F1	F2	F3	M1	Total of strategies
Valuing results and knowledge	4	7	9	0	20

Minimising failure	3	1	3	0	7
Generalisation (of a problem, a habit)	2	3	0	0	5
Emphasising the difficulty of a particular task	4	1	0	0	5
Depersonalisation of failure or difficulty	2	0	0	0	2
Giving incentives	2	0	0	0	2
Total per advisor	17	12	12	0	41

The results are only indicative, as the need to provide support will strongly depend on the learners' demands, a variable which is not controlled here, as the sessions were selected at random. But they give some tendencies on the variation of support strategies in advising practice. 'Valuing results and knowledge' (20 occurrences) and 'minimising failure' (7 occurrences) are the preferred support strategies found in the data. They are present in F1, F2 and F3's discourse thus suggesting that age (in the sense of experience) and work setting do not seem to predict advisors' supporting behaviour. LLAs at the private centre seem to use a wider range of support strategies (6 strategies for F1 and 4 strategies for F2) than LLAs at the university (2 and 0). Regarding gender, support strategies are totally absent from the male LLA's speech, which confirms for the moment the feminine stereotype of support, but this point will need verification in a larger set of data. The three female LLAs use a fairly similar amount of support strategies (17, 12 and 12) and the variation in F1 could possibly be idiosyncratic.

Listening

The measure of listening in interaction is a not an easy task. The amount of speech could serve as an indicator of listening, although this is not totally satisfying. The amount of silence could also serve as an indicator of listening. Gremmo (1995, p. 50) has raised the question of silence in the practice of ALL:

The advisor must do his or her best to keep the interaction at least symmetrical (…) the advisor tends to refuse to control the interaction by letting silence settle, by not systematically speaking first, by not initiating new topics, (…).[4]

Apart from the fact that measuring silence is methodologically far more difficult than measuring the speech amount, it must be taken into account that being silent does not necessarily equate with attentive listening: one can be thinking about other things while learner is talking. Likewise, producing active signs of listening does not necessarily mean that genuine listening is occurring. It may well mean that one is trying to get the floor. For these reasons the researchers decided to start with the measure of speech amount, based on the number of words of advisors and learners (cf. Figure 1), and to delay the analysis of silence time to another research phase.

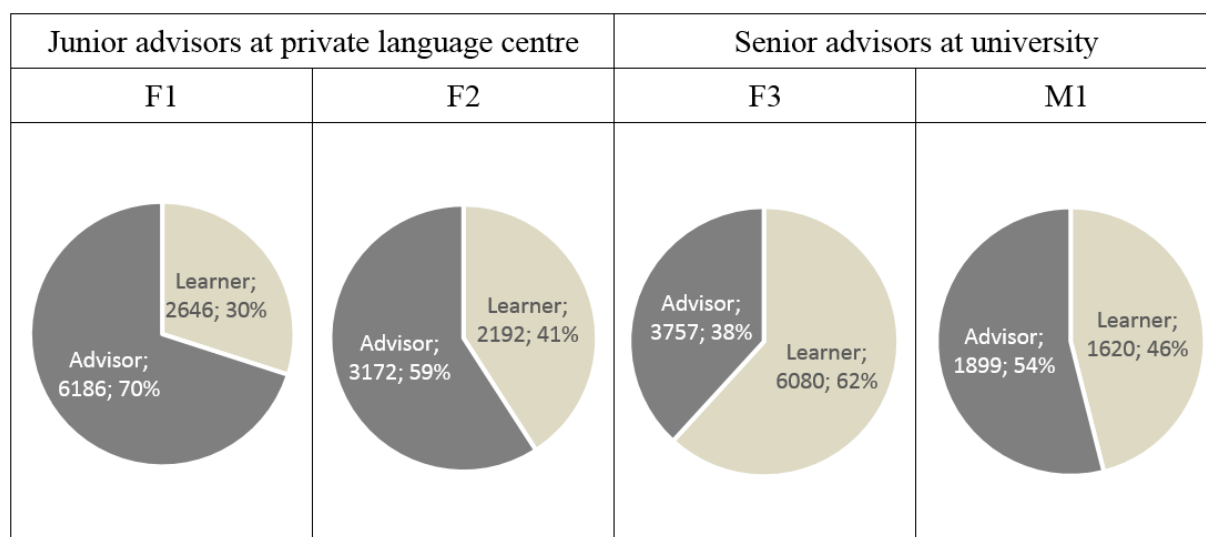| Junior advisors at private language centre		Senior advisors at university	
F1	F2	F3	M1

Figure 1. Distribution of Speech Measured by the Total Number of Words Pronounced and its Percentage for Each Speaker (advisors in dark grey, learners in light grey).

In three of these sessions, F1, F2 and M1 hold a majority of the speech. This majority varies from 54 to 70 percent of the words. F1 and F2, the junior female advisors at the private centre are the ones who talk most. Senior advisors talk less and, with F3, it is the learner who holds the majority of pronounced words (62%). Although this tendency needs confirmation from a larger sample, it confirms Ciekanski's results (2007) who found that LLAs

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[4] Translation in English by the researchers from the original version in French : « Le conseiller doit tout donc faire pour que l'interaction soit au minimum symétrique […] le conseiller va chercher à refuser de contrôler l'interaction en laissant le silence s'installer, en ne prenant pas systématiquement la parole en premier, en n'initiant pas de thème nouveau, (…). »

consistently hold the lead in advising sessions. To find out whether the variation found in this study is due to idiosyncratic features or the result of contextual variables, more investigation needs to be done. But, here again, sexed identity does not seem to predict the amount of speech of advisors. The age and the work setting of the LLAs seem more likely to affect their speech amount.

Discussion

These primary results indicate some congruence between advising talk, so-called feminine interactional style and powerless speech, regardless of the sex of LLAs, especially as regards the use of indirect speech and FTA's softeners. This could be related to the fact that some of the first historical empirical observations on ALL, like Gremmo's (1995) and Bailly's (1995), had female LLAs as subjects and were led by women researchers. There is a possibility that the women advisors whose speech was analysed, were 'doing advising in a feminine way', i.e. by integrating their sexed identity to their professional identity. Then, the descriptions of their speech style have possibly become over time a norm of reference for training or in-practice advisors, as Ciekanski (2005) suggested.

However, so-called masculine strategies (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Talbot, 2003), like direct orders or disagreements, are also present in the corpus of this study, both in male and female LLAs' speech. Thus masculine and feminine verbal strategies do not seem to conflict in the act of advising. These findings support those of other studies on gendered talk at work that show that professional men and women draw on a range of strategies either "male-powerful" and "female-powerless" to successfully accomplish their practical goals (Holmes, 2006).

Regarding the psychological support dimension, the wide range of support strategies found in the data suggest that LLAs might be aware of the fact that emotional management is also a part of the work of advising. By controlling both the formal and content aspects of their speech, they aim at creating and sustaining a relationship that is favourable to the learner's self-expression, thus demonstrating a form of emotional intelligence.

The results also show that face work is present in face-to-face advising, although it has not been clearly established yet to what extent, which relates LLAs speech to so-called powerless speech, and ALL work to emotional labour. It is quite striking that the following features: support strategies, softeners of FTAs and dominance of speech time, are much more present in the two youngest LLAs, both female and working in the private language school

where the LLA-learner relationship is also a service worker-customer relationship. This finding could open new tracks for further research.

As regards the research questions:

1. Is advisors discourse indirect, supportive and do LLAs listen to learners?

It can be answered that advisors from the sample do use more indirect speech than direct speech with FTAs such as orders and disagreement; and that they use a wide range of verbal support strategies. However it cannot be said whether, and to what extent, they listen to the learners. Indeed, advisors tend to talk more than the learners, implying that the learners have to listen to more words than advisors, with one exception. However, measuring advisors' listening under this criteria does not seem sufficient.

2. Are linguistic markers of powerless speech present and with what functions?

Powerless speech markers such as hedges, modals, minimisers, depersonalisation, etc. are quite present in the corpus. In accordance with the politeness theory, they are used to do face work, maybe for psychological reasons, like not hurting the learners' feelings or providing gratification for their efforts. The researchers propose to interpret this behaviour not as a sign of insecurity and to re-conceptualise powerless speech in the context of advising as emotional management.

3. What evidence could be found to support the hypothesis that doing advising is doing emotional work?

In addition to the evidence of the rather high presence of face work in each advising session from the corpus, the distribution of face-work markers (like indirectness and support) according to work setting could support the view of advising as emotional work. Keeping the client satisfied might be part of the agenda of the two junior advisors at the private centre and could explain the higher rates of indirect speech and support strategies in their discourse.

Limitations and Conclusions

The researchers are aware of several limitations associated with this study. To begin, it is based on a very small sample, involving only four different LLAs during four advising

sessions. Therefore, the possibility for generalisations is rather limited and this study's claims cannot be substantiated until the research framework is applied to a much larger data set.

A second limitation is that the study only examines the LLAs parts of the dialogue, except for the analysis on listening which compares both learners' and LLAs' number of words pronounced. As for any interaction, advising talk is the result of co-construction and further research will have to take this aspect into account. But so far, this study constitutes a useful methodological guideline for further and more extensive research inside the whole data base. It also provides new research questions for future investigation.

Despite these limitations, the data is a source of fresh information on what Gremmo (1995) has called "psychological support", a part of the advising practice that is currently not well documented. This study shows that so-called powerless speech and feminine interaction strategies are used to establish a helping, and possibly empowering relationship (although this aspect would need further research): they are not irreconcilable with establishing domain expertise and authority that learners are entitled to expect.

Notes on the contributors

Sophie Bailly is a professor in Applied Linguistics at the University of Lorraine and a member of the laboratory ATILF (UMR 7118). Her main research interests are the relationships between language and gender, self-directed language learning and advising in language learning.

Guillaume Nassau is a PhD student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Lorraine and a member of the laboratory ATILF (UMR 7118). His research mainly concerns the emotional aspect of language learning in self-directed language learning contexts. He is also interested in the conception of online language learning scheme.

Anouchka Divoux is a master's degree student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Lorraine.

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