

## Exploration of Mulan's Employment of Masculine Language in *Mulan* (Disney 1998)

Yiyang Liao<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*This paper examines the unique employment of masculine language by the character Mulan in Disney's 1998 film *Mulan*, underpinning its analysis with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Unlike traditional Disney princesses, Mulan adopts a non-stereotypical female role by disguising herself as a male warrior to save her country. With a conversation analysis approach, this study delves into how Mulan's language reflects masculinity, thereby challenging conventional gender roles and contributing to her portrayal as a formidable war hero. Using a sociolinguistic framework by scholars Tannen, Coates, and Mills, the paper analyses seven conversations from the film to reveal how Mulan's speech aligns with masculine constructs such as assertiveness, independence, and dominance. The findings of this paper not only support Butler's notion that gender is performative but also highlight the media's role in shaping and challenging societal norms concerning gender.*

**Keywords:** *Disney Mulan, Gender Performativity, Conversation Analysis, Gender Differences in Language, Masculine Speaking Style of a Female*

### Introduction

"Gender has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norms which define 'masculinity' and 'femininity'" (Cameron, 1998). One powerful way gender is reaffirmed is through the media people expose children to. In Disney media, for example, stereotypical portrayals of gender are common, wherein male-coded characters are often depicted as more adventurous, assertive, powerful, braver, and generally more accomplished (Streiff & Dundes, 2017a, 2017b); female-coded characters, on the other hand, are typically depicted as affectionate and helpful (Aley & Hahn, 2020; Baker & Raney, 2007; England et al., 2011; Leaper et al., 2002). Among all Disney movies, *Mulan* atypically constructs and performs a non-stereotypical female image of Mulan as a war hero. In the film, with the help of guardian Mushu, Mulan joins the army in a male disguise for her father and wins the war honours. However, despite her contribution, when Mulan's female identity is revealed, she is dismissed by the army due to rules that forbid women from serving. After that, the soldiers returned to the capital city and thought the war had ended, but Mulan bravely warned Shang just as the enemy Huns seized the palace and took the Emperor hostage. Eventually, Mulan defeated the Huns and protected her country.

This paper mainly focuses on analysing the gendered way of speaking of *Mulan*. Specifically, it addresses the research question (RQ): How does the character Mulan employ masculine language in Disney's 1998 film *Mulan* to challenge traditional gender roles and construct her masculine identity? As the plot indicates, *Mulan* breaks the traditional image of a woman by acting courageously and assertively like a man. She not only acts manly to save the whole country but also speaks in a masculine way. Her unusual female identity as a Disney Princess triggers further exploration of her image in a sociolinguistic sense. The analysis interestingly observes the consistent masculinity in Mulan's language, matching her powerfulness, assertiveness, and bravery—stereotypically male characteristics. The result of the analysis echoes Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which posits that an individual's identity is constructed through one's actions and choices, rather than being predetermined by one's gender (1990).

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of arts, The University of Hong Kong, Email: [yiyangliao2020@yeah.net](mailto:yiyangliao2020@yeah.net)

*Theoretical Frameworks**Gender Performativity*

This essay fundamentally aligns with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. In her book *Gender Trouble: feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler suggests, "Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulated social framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance (Butler, 1990)." In this sense, gender is constructed by humans' acts, such as talking, rather than being patterned by default sex. In response to Butler's theory, Cameron (1998), in her paper *Performing Gender Identity*, analyses the "antithesis of man"—men with feminine speech construction. Drawing past studies related to gender differences in conversations, this paper will analyse *Mulan* as the "antithesis of woman", a female with a masculine speaking style. Therefore, instead of feminine styles, the masculine speech constructs and performs *Mulan*'s identity as a woman, a war hero, serving as another example echoing Butler's gender performativity.

*Gender Differences in Talking*

Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand*, Jennifer Coates' *Women, men, and Language*, and Sara Mills' *Gender and Politeness* present differences in men's and women's speaking styles. The specific traits observed by those scholars serve as baseline theories for this essay to deconstruct *Mulan*'s speech.

*You Just Don't Understand* by Deborah Tannen is a pioneering sociolinguistic study on men's and women's talk. According to the book, the primary distinction between the two genders lies in the theory of rapport talk and report talk. That is, women use rapport talk/private speaking, "a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships", usually in a private setting. In contrast, men use report talk/public talk "by exhibiting knowledge and skill, and by holding centre stage through verbal performance such as storytelling, joking, and imparting information", usually in a public place. The study identifies the following specific differences:

Men talk for status while women talk for support. The status leads to the formation of a hierarchy and contest between the parties, indicating the inherently adversarial nature of men's speech.

In a talk, men pursue independence whereas women pursue intimacy. To manifest independence, men even refuse the slightest hint that anyone tells them what to do.

Men are prone to giving advice and solving problems, whereas women show understanding of others' dilemmas.

Men are more likely to offer information, and, in contrast, women express more feelings;

Conflicts are avoided by women but are welcomed by men. Indeed, many men create affiliation by aggression and opposition.

Lecturing and Listening: Men prefer the first, whereas women prefer the second.

Men are more likely to interrupt others' speech as an interruption as a sign of dominance.

Assertiveness is a sign of men's speech.

Moreover, Jennifer Coates' book *Women, men, and Language* provides a summary of conversational differences between men and women. Among them, men's speaking features that relate to *Mulan*'s talk include:

Men are less polite than women.

Men use explicit commands and aggravated directives (i.e. imperatives)—speech acts that try to order someone—to establish status differences between themselves.

Men swear more and use more taboo language.

Questions are associated with powerful and male speakers.

Men are oriented to the referential functions of talk.

Furthermore, Sara Mills' book *Gender and Politeness* also adds to the theoretical framework for analysis:

Stereotypically, femininity is associated with politeness and powerlessness. Specifically, a positive face refers to one's self-esteem while a negative face is "freedom from imposition by others". Women's avoidance of face-threatening acts is a sign of politeness, and, in contrast, men are more accustomed to making face-threatening acts.

Men are more antagonistic and powerful than women in speaking.

Characteristics associated with deference and positions of unequal power are markers of femininity.

Proxemic cues and nonverbal communication lead people to interpret others' politeness differently. Thus, aside from verbal language, body language also enlightens the analysis of masculine style.

## Methodology

### *Data Collection*

To analyse Mulan's gendered way of speaking, this study meticulously selected seven cross-gender conversations from the Disney film *Mulan* (1998). These conversations were chosen based on Mulan's character arc: before she joined the army, after she joined the army, and after she was expelled from the army. The data records Mulan's speech when she assumes different roles: daughter, soldier, and friend. This approach ensures that the data represent different stages of Mulan's identity transformation and various contexts of her speech.

The primary data collection method involved a conversation analysis transcription approach to the selected dialogues from the film. Each transcription captures not only the verbal exchanges but also non-verbal cues such as tone, intonation, and proxemic actions, which are essential for Mulan to construct her masculine identity.

### *Sampling*

The sampling strategy intentionally focuses on conversations that feature Mulan's interaction with male characters. The selected conversations provide a representative sample of Mulan's language use throughout the movie, showcasing her speech as a daughter, soldier, and friend. Thus, the study aims to provide a holistic view of Mulan's speech patterns. This sampling method facilitates an in-depth analysis of the evolution and consistency of Mulan's masculine language use.

### *Data Analysis Approach*

The data analysis was conducted using conversation analysis, a qualitative method that examines the features of oral interactions. This approach allows for a detailed examination of the linguistic and social aspects of Mulan's speech. Regarding the analytical tool, the analysis was guided by theoretical frameworks on gendered speech, particularly drawing from the works of Deborah Tannen, Jennifer Coates, and Sara Mills. These frameworks provided a basis for identifying and categorizing the gendered aspects of Mulan's speech,

focusing on identifying masculine speech traits, such as assertiveness, the use of commands, interruption patterns, and the use of taboo language.

### *Data Analysis*

#### *Data 1*

**Mulan:** Father, I brought your... Whoa! ((bangs into Fa Zhou))

**Fa Zhou:** Mulan.

**Mulan:** I brought a spare.

((pulls out a cup from underneath the back of her dress and begins to pour the tea.))

**Fa Zhou:** Mulan.

**Mulan:** Remember, the doctor said three cups of tea in the morning?

**Fa Zhou:** Mulan.

**Mulan:** and three at night.

**Fa Zhou:** Mulan, you should already be in town. We're counting on you to...

**Mulan:** uphold the family honour. Don't worry, Father. (.)I won't let you down.

Wish me luck?

**Fa Zhou:** Hurry!(.) I'm going to...(.) pray some more.

The data records Mulan's casual chat with her father in a home setting which takes place before she impersonates a male and joins the army. While Mulan's father Fa Zhou seriously expresses his expectation for Mulan to uphold the family honour by marriage, Mulan, on the contrary, cheekily reminds her father to drink tea every day.

The data has shown that at the very beginning of the movie when Mulan acts in her female identity, Mulan's speech is filled with masculine styles. Impoliteness stands out prominently in Mulan's speech. From the beginning, Mulan initiates the conversation by carelessly 01 “((bangs into Fa Zhou))”. The proxemic action is a crucial avenue in understanding politeness (Mills, 2003). Here, “bang into”, or strike violently (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024a), unveils the intensity of the action that Mulan imposes on her dad. In ancient China where familial hierarchy prevails, it is very disrespectful to act in such a violent and offensive way, implying Mulan's impropriety as a girl. Next, when she speaks, Mulan gives a lecture on her father by 05 “Remember, the doctor said three cups of tea in the morning?” The imperative “remember” belongs to “aggravated directives” that are preferred by males (Coates, 2015), adding the tone of command to the speech. Indeed, by quoting a doctor's professional advice, Mulan attempts to educate his father with health lessons, conforming to males' ways of speaking (Tannen, 1990).

Granted, educating the elders is impolite. Mulan's later interruption to her father's speech—— 09 “Uphold the family honour” ——further strengthens her impolite image. Cutting off her father's words and picking up the conversation by imitating Fa Zhou's tone, Mulan creates a punchline to the movie. While joke-telling skills are assumed to be men's (Tannen, 1990), a sign of self-display and report talk, Mulan's sense of humour constructs her identity as masculine. Her last line 09 “Don't worry, Father” reveals her confidence and assertiveness, a trait of men's speech (Tannen, 1990).

*Data 2*

**Mulan:** ((pours the tea, then sets her cup down with a bang.))

You shouldn't have to go!((standing up suddenly))

**Fa Li:** [Mulan! ((look at Mulan, worried))

**Mulan:]** There are plenty of young men to fight for China!

**Fa Zhou:** It is an honour to protect my country and: my family.

**Mulan:** So you'll die for honour.

**Fa Zhou:** I will die: doing what's: right.

**Mulan:** But if [you-

**Fa Zhou:** I KNOW MY PLACE. It is time you learned yours.

**Mulan:** ((stares at her father for a moment, then runs outside crying.))

This data is from before Mulan joined the army. Mulan heard her father was recruited to join the army. At the family dinner with her mother, Fa Li, and father, Fa Zhou, she tries to talk her father out of doing military service.

The data has manifested that Mulan speaks bravely and impolitely with her elderly, father, further performing her masculine identity. At first, Mulan's body language 01 "set(ting) her cup down with a bang" and 02 "standing up in a sudden" rudely makes noise and negatively draws everyone's attention. The non-verbal communication establishes Mulan as an impolite girl. Then, in regards to verbal cues, both Coates (2015) and Mills (2003) suggest that women are less likely to do FTAs (Face-Threatening Acts) than men. Here, in 02 "You shouldn't have to go!" Mulan confronts her dad about his decision to join the military, which threatens her dad's negative face by imposing her thoughts on his freedom (Mills, 2003). The assertiveness conveyed by "have to" manifests the masculine style of Mulan as well. Immediately after, Mulan's mother, Fali shouts to stop her actions in 02 "Mulan!", but impolitely, Mulan does not defer to her mother, which is not a feminine trait suggested by Mills (2003). In 05, Mulan says, 06 "So you'll die: for honour". 'Death' is taboo in traditional Chinese culture, and men are more likely to speak taboo language than women (Coates, 2015). With taboo language of "death", Mulan explicitly speaks out about the tragic consequence of saving her father, contradicting the need for politeness (Mills, 2003). Mulan unconventionally acts impolitely as a woman. Moreover, she is not afraid of creating conflicts, which most women avoid (Tannen, 1990). At the end of the conversation, Mulan's father angrily interrupts her, 09 "It is time to learn yours (your place)". From her father's perspective, Mulan's actions and words are completely at odds with the standards of ancient women, reflecting her misalignment with traditional female identity.

*Data 3*

**Mulan:** ((stares at the tiny dragon for a moment.))

**Mushu:** Haha, pretty hot, huh?

**Mulan:** My ancestors sent a little lizard to help me?

**Mushu:** Hey, dragon, dragon, not lizard. I don't do that tongue thing.

**Mulan:** You're? =:um ...

**Mushu:** Intimidating? Awe-inspiring?

**Mulan:** Tiny.

**Mushu:** Of course! I'm travel-size for your convenience.

If I was my real size, your cow here would die of fright.

Down, Bessy. My powers are beyond your mortal imagination.

For instance, my eyes can see straight? through your armour. ((Mulan slaps him))

Alright! THAT'S IT! Dishonour!

Dishonour on your whole family!

Make a note of this. Dishonour on you, dishonour on your co:w, dis-

**Mulan:** ((covers Mushu's mouth)) Stop! I'm sorry! I'm sorry.

I'm just nervous. I've never done this before.

**Mushu:** Then you're gonna have to TRUST me.

And don't you slap me no more. We clear on that? ((Mulan nods)). Alright.

OKEY-DOKEY! Let's get this show on the road!

Crickee, get the bags! Let's move it heifer!

The data is Mulan's conversation with her ancestor dragon Mushu after she decided to join the army. Mushu introduces himself and his purpose of helping Mulan while Mulan is confused with Mushu's identity.

Powerful status is a remarkable trait of this conversation. In the beginning, Mulan responds to Mushu's identity with a question: 03 "My ancestors sent a little lizard to help me?" According to Mills, questions are associated with dominance often exhibited by men. The question itself puts Mulan in a powerful position. The noun "little lizard" implies Mulan's manly contemplation of the size of Mushu, which potentially threatens Mushu's positive face—the need to be approved and appreciated (Sifianou, 2011). Also, the adjective "little" creates the status difference between Mulan as a human being and Mushu as a little animal, a symbol of men's speech (Tannen, 1990). Moreover, her later response to Mushu's self-description 06 "Intimidating? Awe-inspiring?"—07 "tiny"—is an unexpected twist, injecting humour into conversation. As a female, Mulan is familiar with masculine ways of speaking—and joking, which also makes her a powerful speaker. Later, in response to Mushu's speech, in the proxemic cue 11 "((Mulan slaps him))", "slap" is an aggressive and rude strike (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024b), manifesting Mulan's dominance over the situation. Then, Mulan interrupts and stops Mushu's talking by 15 "stop". Not only does interruption mark men's speech, but the command 'stop' also reflects men's communication style. The masculine way of talking, Mulan's assertive tone and eloquent delivery, establish her as a powerful speaker, defying traditional gender norms.

*Data 4*

**Li Shang:** I don't need anyone causing trouble in my camp.

**Mulan:** ((looks away and avoids eye contact)) Sorry hhh (.) Uhhh.... (coughs) I mean uh,

((deep voice)) sorry you had to see that ((stands straight, raises chest))

((deep voice)) you know when you have those uh(.) manly urges, (.) and you just gotta kill somethin.  
((bumps chest, chops hand))

((groans)) fix things, uh, cook [outdoors...]

**Li Shang:**]What's your name?

**Mulan:** = Uhh.. I .. uh= ((averts eye contact))

The data is from when Mulan just joined the army. Because of a fight with other soldiers, she, as a new soldier, is surrounded by all the soldiers and questioned by Li Shang, the commanding officer. To blend in with the army, she pretends to act and speak like a man.

Being surrounded, Mulan is aware of the necessity to do public/report talk, a masculine speaking style. She immediately 03 “deepens her voice, stands straight, and raises her chest”. As Mills (2003) suggests, proxemic cues lead people to interpret the other's politeness differently. In our data, we also newly discovered that Mulan's tone, postures, and proxemic cues, display masculinity and confidence. In accordance with proxemic acts, Mulan speaks masculinely with reference to 04 “manly urges”. “Manly urges” are urges to do something as a male. It can be indicated in the violent, explicit command, 04 “you just gotta kill something”. The informal verb “gotta” is an example of aggravated directives that men use to establish different statuses among themselves (Coates, 2015). The informality of “gotta” also avoids the feminine politeness within the hypercorrect and formal language (Mills, 2003). Moreover, such 04 “manly urges”, including “killing”, “fixing”, and “cooking outdoors”, according to Mulan, are antagonistic strategies men use to display their masculinity (Mills, 2003).

*Data 5*

[Moo Shung Camp, at noon]

**Mushu:** Hey, this is not a good idea. What if somebody sees you?

**Mulan:** Just because I look like a man doesn't mean I have to smell like one.

**Mushu:** So a couple guys↑ don't rinse out their socks.

Picky, picky, picky. Well, myself, I kinda like that corn-chip smell.

**Mulan:** ((jumps in the water)) =Ah.

**Mushu:** Okay, all right, alright, that's enough, now c'mon, get out before you get all pruney and stuff.

**Mulan:** Mushu, if you're so worried, go stand watch!

**Mushu:** Yeah, yeah. Stand watch↑, Mushu, while I blow our secrets with my stupid girly habits↑! Pfft. Hygiene.

The conversation unfolds after Mulan enlists in the army, and Mushu expresses concern about Mulan bathing in the open, fearing that her true identity as a woman might be discovered.

Independence marks the speaking style of Mulan. Initially, responding to Mushu's worry, 02 “Just because I look like a man doesn't mean I have to smell like one”, says Mulan. Suggesting no willingness to smell like a man, Mulan shows her determination to take a shower and refuses Mushu's implicit advice that she should not bathe in public. Not listening to the others' instructions is a manly sign (Tannen, 1990) which builds

the independence of Mulan. In the face of Mushu's continuous talking about his worries, Mulan orders him by saying 06 "Go stand watch". The use of an imperative as an aggravated directive acts as a firm rejection of Mushu's advice, shattering the stereotypical image of women's deference and dependence.

*Data 6*

((traditional music playing))

**Man:** Make way for the heroes of China.

((woman cries out))

**Mulan:** ((enters with horse))

**Mulan:** Shang!

**Shang:** Mulan?

**Mulan:** The Huns are alive! .hh(.) They're in the city! ((frown))

**Shang:** You don't belong here Mulan.(.) Go home.

((Mulan frowns and follows Shang))

**Mulan:** Shang, I <saw them> in the mountains. **You HAVE to** believe me.

**Shang:** °why should I?°

(5.0)

**Mulan:** ((rushes in front of Shang))=Why el::se would i come back?(.).You said you'd trust Ping. Why is Mulan any different?

**Shang:** ((silently looks away))

**Mulan:** ((silently look away and frown))=**keep your eyes open.** I KNOW they're here.

**Mulan:** YAH! ((pulls horse away))

This data is after Mulan is expelled by the army because they discover she is a woman. She finds out there are remaining enemies in the city. To save the country, although found as a woman, Mulan catches up with Captain Li Shang to tell him the news.

Featured by commands and questions, Mulan's masculine talk made her a powerful persuader in front of General Shang. Mulan rushes to Shang to talk to him in a very public setting, where she puts herself on display for public attention, constructing a public/report talk, according to Tannen (1990). After publicly shouting 05 "Shang!" to claim Shang's attention, Mulan immediately delivers the key message 07 "The Huns are alive! They're in the city!" Mulan's information delivery corresponds to man's talking style, suggested by Coates (2015) and Tannen (1990), referential functions of talk. After Shang's rejection 08 "Go home", Mulan commands 10 "You HAVE to believe me". Without any mitigated directives, Mulan's command makes her talk to fit into the stereotypical man's talking style (Coates, 2015). Moreover, Coates (2015) also says that men are less concerned with the addressee(s)' desires and use statements in which they tell people what they 'needed' to do or what they 'had' to do. In the same utterance, Mulan is not concerned with his desires and gives him direct commands instead. Confronted by Shang's second rejection, 11 "Why should I?", Mulan continuously asked 2 questions, 12 "Why else would I come back? You said you'd trust Ping.



Why is Mulan any different?” As Coates (2015) suggests, questions are associated with powerful speakers. Mulan's questions make her the powerful dominator of the conversation, opposite to the stereotypical female's powerlessness in conversation. After Shang's silence, by saying 14 “Keep your eyes open”, Mulan decides to use imperatives, an aggravated form of the command, to alert Shang. Two commands and directives from Mulan also construct Mulan as an impolite person, a masculine trait (Mills, 2003).

*Data 7*

**Shan Yu:** No! You! You took away my victory!

**Mulan:** ((uses shoes to hit Shan Yu)) NO!=I did.

**Shan Yu:** The soldier from the mountains!

The conversation happens at the very end of the movie when Mulan's female identity is exposed and she tries to save the general Shang by defeating Shan Yu.

Powerful and impolite, Mulan speaks masculinely as a war hero. In body language 02 “((uses shoes to hit Shan Yu))”, the action “hit” brusquely and manly leads to the conflict between Mulan and Shan Yu. The interruption 02 “NO! I did” threatens Shan Yu's positive face of being approved since Mulan took his victory away. Also, the loud voice “NO” makes Mulan's speech powerful and assertive, constructing her masculine and brave war hero identity.

## Discussion

In answering the research question: How does the character Mulan employ masculine language in Disney's 1998 film *Mulan* to challenge traditional gender roles and construct her masculine identity?, this research on Mulan's speech patterns has discovered a consistent use of masculine language traits such as assertiveness, impoliteness, the use of commands, interruption patterns, and the employment of taboo language, supported by theoretical frameworks on gendered speech by Deborah Tannen, Jennifer Coates, and Sara Mills.

### *Impoliteness*

The belief that women are more polite is widespread and long-lasting (Jennifer, 2015). According to the theories of Tannen (1990), Mills (2003), and Coates (2015) related to men's speaking style, men are more likely to make rude proxemic cues, give lectures to others, confront others, give face-threatening speeches, and use taboo language—signs of impoliteness. However, in the analysis, Mulan's speech deviates from typical feminine traits and aligns with masculine speaking features. For example, in Data 2, Mulan interrupts her father's speech to assert her viewpoint (lines 8-9). This behaviour is consistent with Tannen's (1990) findings that men are more likely to interrupt to dominate the conversation. Mulan's impoliteness signifies her challenge to traditional gender norms and her alignment with masculine speech patterns.

### *Powerfulness*

Femininity in speech is associated with politeness and powerlessness (Mills, 2003). Men's speech is characterised by report talk, commands, joke-telling, assertiveness, independence, and questions—traits suggested by Tannen (1990), Mills (2003), and Coates (2015) which place men at the centre of the conversation. Moreover, impoliteness can be perceived as another form of dominance and powerfulness (Tannen, 1990). Throughout the selected dialogues, Mulan consistently employs powerful language and leads the conversation, which is typically connected to masculine speech. For instance, in Data 1, Mulan's imperative “Remember the doctor said three cups of tea in the morning?” (line 5) reflects commands and assertiveness. This aligns with Coates' (2015) observation that men's speech often includes explicit commands to establish status differences. Mulan's powerfulness in her speech mirrors her decisive actions, reinforcing her constructed masculine identity.

*Connection to Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity*

The findings from the data analysis support Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Butler (1990) posits that gender is not a fixed attribute but is constructed through repeated actions and speech. Mulan's consistent use of masculine language traits exemplifies this performative aspect of gender. By adopting masculine speech, Mulan performs a masculine identity, challenging the traditional gender roles expected of a Disney princess.

## Conclusion

This paper explored the masculine speaking traits of Mulan. Referencing stereotypical masculine speaking features summarised by Tannen (1990), Coates (2015), and Mills (2003), the paper discovered that Mulan's talking is characterised by male style. Our data extracted from 3 different periods in the movie proves the consistency of her masculine speaking style, which forms part of her identity. Responding to Judith Butler's theory, our paper contributes to her statement that "gender is performative" in a sociolinguistic sense. Echoing the introduction, "Gender has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed" (Cameron, 1998). Much like her masculine identity, Mulan's speaking style does not fit into the stereotypical gender pattern. In this sense, this paper challenges some established sociolinguistic norms related to gender: women are associated with powerlessness, politeness (Mills, 2003), and rapport talk (Tannen, 1990). This relates to Cameron's saying that "[it] is possible for men and women to performatively subvert or resist the prevailing codes of gender." (Cameron, 1998). Mulan subverts and resists the femininity-coded speaking styles. In fact, it is her masculinity that makes her a great war hero. In *Mulan*, women could use masculine talk, upholding the idea that gender is performative rather than patterned. This study challenges traditional gender norms and highlights the role of media in shaping and challenging societal perceptions of gender. By demonstrating how a female character can employ masculine speech traits, this paper enriches our understanding of gender performativity and the dynamic nature of gender in language.

There are a few limitations of the study. First, though seven pieces of data are large enough to manifest Mulan's majority speaking style, there is no quantitative analysis as to what percentage of such speaking style occupies Mulan's speech. This limitation implies that while qualitative insights can be drawn from the analysed dialogues, the overall representativeness of these findings across the entirety of Mulan's spoken lines in the film remains uncertain. Second, some analysis is subject to interpretation. The nuances of language, especially when related to gender, are highly contextual and subjective. In the context of *Mulan*, the interpretation of what constitutes "masculine" language can vary among different cultural and academic perspectives. However, as this study is based on theoretical frameworks concluded by previous scholars, it inherently relies on the interpretations and methodologies that have been previously established.

By analysing Mulan's speech, the study serves as an example of Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, offering a new perspective on how gender performs complicatedly rather than stereotypically in the media. Also, the analysis of Mulan's speech is a window showing how Disney constructs its characters and what children perceive from Disney, as Disney gradually breaks its past tradition of portraying gender roles stereotypically and embraces new gender norms with social changes.

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## APPENDIX

## Conversation Analysis Transcription Convention

[word]: overlapped talk

(.): micropauses that are less than 0.3s

=: latching

word: emphasis

wo:rd: prolongation of sound

((word)): non-verbal actions

WORD: words louder than surrounding speech

↑: words produced at a higher pitch than surrounding talk

°word°: talk that is quieter than normal

?: rising intonation

&lt; &gt;: the pace of the speech has slowed down