

Directives Used By Senior Female Police Officers in Lesotho: Exploring the Balance between Culturally Determined and Professional Interactional Styles

Konosoang Mabafokeng Sobane

Human Sciences Research Council, 134 Pretorius Street, Pretoria 0001, South Africa

Cell: 0027 78 170 2567, Telephone: 0027 12 302 2013

E-mail: msobane@gmail.com, KSobane@hsrc.ac.za

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ABSTRACT The recent era of women's empowerment has seen women's gradual role-transition from traditional domestic roles to male-dominated professional spaces. This transition presents a socio-linguistic dilemma for these women, because their interactional styles have to strike a balance between culturally prescribed feminine ways of speaking and communicative demands of their job. This paper explores the use of directives by senior female police officers in the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS). Through observations, audio recordings and unstructured interviews, data was collected from 16 women who were in senior positions in the LMPS. Four types of directives with varying degrees of face threat and imposition were found. These are: inference based, questions, mitigated and direct imperatives. The choice of form was determined by a set of contextual factors not gender. The paper concludes that these women's interactional style reflects competence in varying directive patterns depending on the context.