The Impact of Gender Differences on Response Strategy in e-Negotiation

Wan-Jung Lin, Chia-Hua Hu, and Hsiangchu Lai*

National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung 80424, Taiwan, R.O.C.
d934020008@student.nsysu.edu.tw, ookk36@gmail.com,
hclai@mail.nsysu.edu.tw

Abstract. Gender issues have been present in the traditional negotiation field for a long time, as it has become common for women to play key roles in business. However, few studies have investigated this issue in online situations. Since online negotiation is inevitable in the global business age and its context is different from that of a traditional face-to-face environment, it is valuable to have more understanding of the impact of gender differences on online negotiation. This study explores the impact of different gender dyads on how negotiators strategically respond to their counterparts' behavior from the dyadic interaction perspective. The adopted strategy clusters include (1) distributive information, (2) integrative information, (3) claiming value, and (4) creating value. The content analysis method was applied in order to translate all negotiation transcripts into quantitative data, i.e. behavior units. The resulting behavior units belonging to the four strategy clusters were mined to find the two-sequence dyadic behavioral patterns of each negotiation dyad and then of each gender composition group. Finally, these two-sequence behavioral patterns were categorized into three appropriate strategic behavioral sequences: (1) reciprocal sequence, (2) complementary sequence, and (3) structural sequence. The results indicate that negotiators' strategic responses to their counterparts were impacted by the genders of both the counterparts and the negotiators themselves. In general, negotiators in intra-gender dyads adopt more structural strategy and less reciprocal strategy than those in inter-gender dyads. No matter whether female or male, a negotiator will adapt his or her response strategy based on his or her counterpart's gender.

Keywords: Online negotiation, Gender difference, Gender dyad, Strategic behavior, Response strategy, Sequential pattern, Dyadic interaction.

1 Introduction

The rapid development of electronic commerce has made the Internet an important and unavoidable communication and transaction channel for businesses. With the increase in electronic commercial activity, the chance to engage in negotiation over the Internet, i.e. e-negotiations, is not only inevitable but is also increasing quickly, since e-negotiations allow companies to conquer the limitations of time zones and

* Corresponding author.

R. Sharman, T.S. Raghu, and H.R. Rao (Eds.): WEB 2009, LNBIP 52, pp. 192–205, 2010.

geographical locations [1]. With new communication and computer technologies, negotiations conducted over the Internet are more common and popular [2].

In addition, it is becoming more and more common for women to play important roles in business and in the public arena. This indicates that more women will be involved in e-negotiation. Researchers argue that men and women have different social norms for conversational interaction, to the extent that they even form "distinct speech communities" [3]. Compared with men, women tend to be more collaboration-oriented. As the Internet becomes the major medium of communication, its lack of interpersonal cues, social cues, and physical attractiveness will change communication behavior [4]. For example, the difficulty of presenting social cues creates equal online negotiation circumstances for both genders [5]. Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the impact of gender differences on e-negotiation behavior in order to increase the chance of success in the context of e-negotiation. However, few researches have investigated the gender issue in e-negotiation. Stuhlmacher et al. [6] reviewed 43 studies and explored gender differences by comparing face-to-face negotiation with online negotiation via meta-research methods. However, this research examined gender differences but ignored the essential dyadic interactions in e-negotiation. The absence of the dyadic aspect hinders the revelation of the impact of gender on negotiation, since negotiation is a dynamic process of interactions between two negotiators. Koeszegi et al. [7] noticed the dyadic characteristics of negotiation and compared the gender differences between different gender compositions: a male-only group, a female-only group, and a mixed-gender group. However, they only investigated the frequencies of individual negotiators' behavior types rather than the dyadic interactions among different gender compositions.

Based on the above discussions, we can see that understanding the gender influence from the perspective of dyadic interaction is more valuable than understanding it from the viewpoint of individual behavior. The results should contribute to both individual- and organizational-level e-negotiation because the individual negotiator often negotiates on behalf of his or her affiliation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore gender differences in e-negotiation by examining the strategic behavioral sequence from a dyadic perspective.

2 Negotiation, Media and Gender

2.1 Electronic Negotiation

E-negotiation is a negotiation process that includes information exchange via electronic media [8]. As e-negotiation becomes popular, the difference in communication media is being considered a major factor affecting the negotiation process and results [9]. Poole [10] found that electronic negotiation could facilitate negotiation without the limitations of time and space, support directional comments, and help negotiators focus on negotiation tasks. However, it could also increase a negotiators' feeling of anonymity and reduce abnormal socio-emotional communication due to the lack of interpersonal cues, social cues, and physical attractiveness. Several studies have concluded that different media really influence negotiation processes and results, including decision-making quality, communication satisfaction, and task effectiveness and efficiency [4, 11-13].

2.2 Gender Differences in Negotiation

Socio-linguistic researchers argue that men and women have different social norms for conversational interaction, to such an extent that they even form "distinct speech communities" [3]. Men tend to be competitive, focus on social hierarchy, assert independence, and seek respect. On the contrary, women tend to be network-oriented, create intimacy, and highlight cooperation [3, 14].

When negotiation is conducted online, the different negotiation channels might lead men or women to change their communication styles because the online communication medium may have many fewer interpersonal, social, and physical cues than traditional face-to-face context. Koeszegi [7] found that women in e-negotiation tend to disclose more information about personal interests and needs and to show more yielding behavior, while men tend to be more persuasive and competitive. Stuhlmacher [6] also found that women are more hostile in electronic negotiation than in face-to-face negotiation. This might result from the fact that the environment of electronic negotiation can allow women to ignore status cues and can reduce the pressure of the obedience norm. E-negotiation may also allow women to focus on negotiation tasks rather than the maintenance of relationships.

2.3 Interaction between Gender Composition of Negotiation Dyads

Negotiation is a series of social interactions and communications that involves two or more participants [15]. Since gender differences affect negotiation behavior, it is expected that the negotiation process will be impacted by the gender composition of a negotiation dyad. When a negotiator knows his or her counterpart's gender, he or she might develop expectations and beliefs about that counterpart based on gender stereotypes. Since negotiation is a process of interactions between negotiator and counterpart, such gender stereotypes would affect both the negotiator's and counterpart's behaviors [16]. In a mixed-gender group discussion in a face-to-face environment, men generally like to present themselves and are more talkative. When communication channel shifts to online, women viewed computer-mediated communication more favorably than men because the online environment may increase women's opportunities to "have their say" without being shut out of active roles by dominant men within a group decision [17].

Prior research has found that in a problem-solving discussion within a mixed-gender group in a face-to-face environment, men proposed the first suggestion for a solution five times as often as women did. However, when the same group discussed problems via a computer-mediated medium, women were often the first to suggest a solution, doing so as often as the men [18]. This result implies that when there is not enough information about a counterpart, there can be no gender differences in expectations and perceptions. When they learned their partners' gender, women were perceived as more cooperative and less exploitative than men [19]. Koeszegi et al. [7] also found that men will display more integrative and sensitive behaviors when negotiating with women, while they become more contributive to current issues when negotiating with other men. Based on the above discussion, we can infer that gender differences still exist in the e-negotiation context and could result from the synergistic effect of the gender composition of negotiation dyads and the selected communication media.

2.4 Negotiation Behavior, Sequence, and Strategy

Strategy is a systematic plan of action presented by a behavioral sequence. A strategy decision will have an impact on negotiation behavior, hence the outcomes [20]. Typically, negotiation behaviors can be classified into two types: distributive and integrative strategies. The former means that a negotiator's goal is to maximize his or her interests. In contrast, the goal of the latter strategy is to maximize mutual joint gain [21, 22]. Further, Weingart et al. [23] explored negotiation strategy through two dimensions: strategy orientation and strategy function. Strategy orientation includes distributive and integrative strategies, while strategy function involves information and action. Based on these two dimensions, there are four negotiation strategies: (1) distributive information, (2) integrative information, (3) claiming value, and (4) creating value (Table 1).

Table 1. Four Types of Negotiation Strategies

Strategy Function	Strategy Orientation	
	Distributive	Integrative
Information	Distributive Information ● Positions ● Facts	Integrative Information ● Priorities ● Needs ● Interests
Action	Claiming Value ● Substantiation ● Threats ● Power Use ● Bottom-Line ● Single-Issue Offer	Creating Value ● Packaging ● Tradeoffs ● Creative Solutions ● Multi-Issue Offers

Source: [23, 24]

Table 2. Examples of Strategic Behavioral Sequences

Initial Behavior	Type of Strategic Behavioral Sequence		
	Reciprocal	Complementary	Structural
Integrative Information (InfoI)	InfoI→InfoI	InfoI→Create	InfoI→Claim InfoI→InfoD
Creating Value (Create)	Create→Creat	Create→InfoI	Create→InfoD Create→Claim
Distributive Information (InfoD)	InfoD→InfoD	InfoD→Claim	InfoD→Create InfoD→InfoI
Claiming Value (Claim)	Claim→Claim	Claim→InfoD	Claim→InfoI Claim→Create

Source: [25]

As shown above, negotiation is a dynamic process of continually intertwined interactions between the involved negotiators. These interactions, i.e., actions and associated responses, form the sequences of negotiation behaviors [25]. These sequences result in the negotiation process and outcome [26]. Further, prior research

has identified three types of strategic behavioral sequences based on whether or not negotiators are moving in synchronization. These are (1) reciprocal sequences, (2) complementary sequences, and (3) structural sequences [25, 27, 28]. A reciprocal sequence indicates that a negotiator responds to a counterpart's integrative or distributive behaviors with exactly the same type of behavior. A complementary sequence is when a negotiator replies to an integrative or distributive behavior with a different but functionally similar behavior. Finally, a structural sequence is when a negotiator reacts to a counterpart's behavior with a very different behavior belonging to a different strategy cluster. Table 2 shows an example of this phenomenon.

3 Research Model

The purpose of this study is to explore the gender differences in e-negotiation. Because the negotiation process can be viewed as a series of actions and reactions that are highly interdependent, it is important to examine the strategic behavioral sequence from a dyadic perspective. A dyadic sequence examination can provide more sophisticated findings than an examination of an individual's behavior because the strategic behavioral sequence presents the causal relation between a negotiator's action and an associated counterpart's reaction. A negotiation dyad could be women only, men only, or women and men. Prior research has found gender differences in e-negotiation. However, such studies have examined either individual behavior only or the frequency of dyadic behavior, rather than the dyadic behavioral sequence. This study explores gender differences by examining whether or not the dyadic behavioral sequence will be impacted by the gender composition of negotiation dyads. We adopted three types of strategic behavioral sequences: (1) reciprocal sequence, (2) complementary sequence, and (3) structural sequence [25]. The research model is shown in Fig. 1.

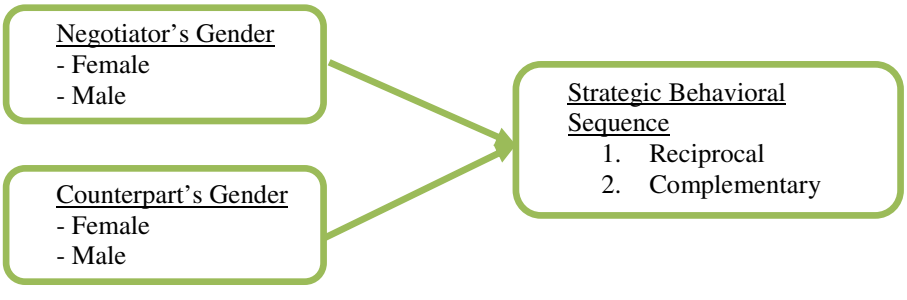


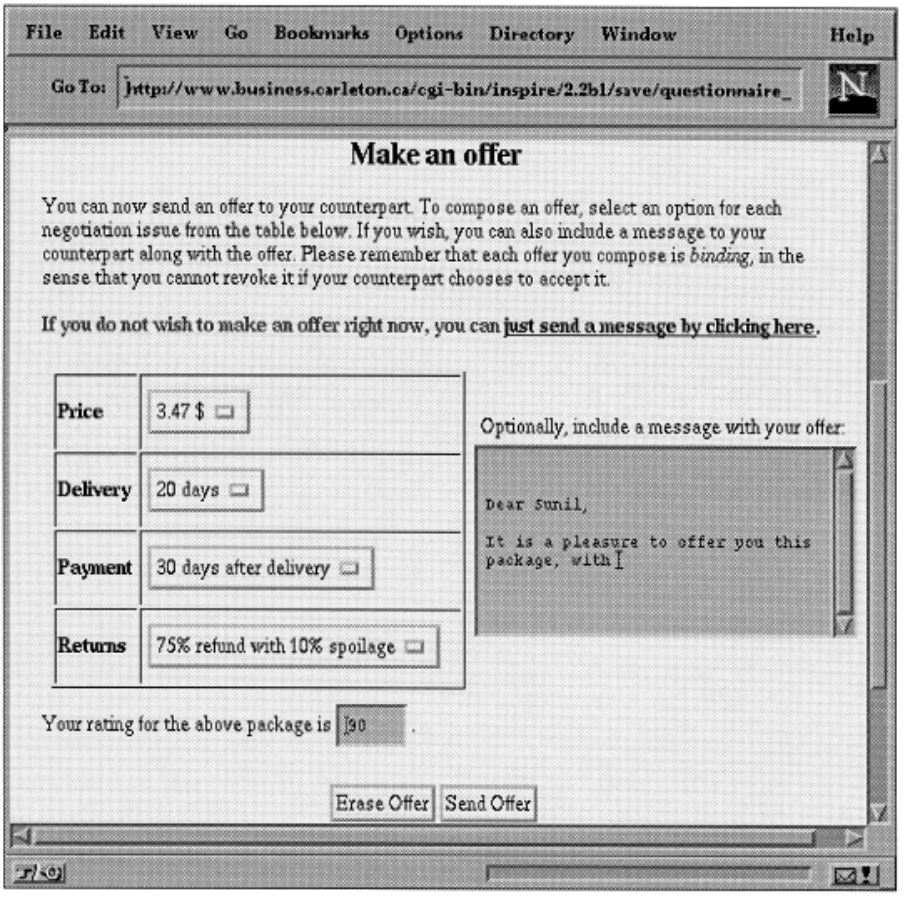
Fig. 1. Research Model

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Data Collection

The data was collected by the Inspire system, an e-negotiation system that has been operational since 1996. From the numerous samples we selected 60 pairs (120 negotiators) of negotiations based on the research model. All negotiators belonged to

three different gender compositions: female-only (women in an intra-gender group), male-only (men in an intra-gender group) and mixed-gender. Each composition had 20 dyads. Female-only and male-only dyads form intra-gender groups, while mixed-gender dyads form inter-gender groups. In order to avoid the interference of cultural differences, all selected subjects were from Western countries. However, due to limited data, this research only chose subjects from some representative Western countries (Austria, Germany, the U.S., and Canada).



Source: [29]

Fig. 2. Inspire System Interface

The negotiation scenario, role-play, and utility design were the same for all subjects. The only difference was the gender composition of the negotiation dyads of different groups. The negotiation case dealt with the purchasing of bicycle parts, an interaction between a buyer and a seller. The deal included four issues: price, delivery, payment, and returns. All subjects were allowed to negotiate for three weeks. In order to simulate the real world, they had full freedom to reveal or hide their own gender background and

could terminate the negotiation at any time. Fig. 2 shows the Inspire interface for submitting offers and messages.

4.2 Data Transfer Process

A great benefit of e-negotiation is that the negotiation process can be completely collected. The main purpose of this research is to study the dyadic sequences of the strategic behavior of different gender compositions. Therefore, the negotiation transcripts of all selected subjects are the data source for this research. Three major analyses were applied to these transcripts, step by step: (1) content analysis – to translate the qualitative messages of each negotiator into quantitative behavioral units; (2) mining of two-sequence dyadic behavioral patterns – to find the two-sequence dyadic behavioral pattern of each negotiation dyad and then of each gender composition group; (3) strategic behavioral sequence identification – identify the two-sequence dyadic behavioral patterns into appropriate strategic behavioral sequences.

Content Analysis. Two critical issues of content analysis when translating the negotiation transcripts into quantitative behavioral units are unitization and categorization [30]. We adopted the thought unit as the behavior unit to unitize all transcripts. Regarding categorization, the nine major categories adopted in this study were proposed by Weingart [23] and Koeszegi [7]: (1) integrative information, (2) creating value, (3) distributive information, (4) claiming value, (5) private communication, (6) communication protocol, (7) text-specific units, (8) procedural communication, and (9) push to closure. There were two coders to conduct content analysis throughout the whole process. Throughout the process, the inter-coder reliabilities of unit segmentation, coding reliability, and coding outlines were checked and modified iteratively. For unit segmentation reliability, we adopted Guetzkow's U reliability test [31] and the result ($U = 0.0009$) indicates high reliability [32, 33]. With Cohen's Kappa, coding reliability (Cohen's Kappa = 0.90) is also higher than 0.8 [34]. Finally, there are nine major behavioral categories with 60 sub-categories.

Mining of Two-Sequence Dyadic Behavioral Patterns. The essence of this research is to examine the gender differences in e-negotiation from a dyadic interaction perspective. Therefore, the next step is to find a two-sequence dyadic behavioral pattern. Here, "two-sequence dyadic behavior" means a behavioral sequence including a counterpart's behavior unit and the negotiator's own responding behavior unit, while "two-sequence dyadic behavioral pattern" means a significant two-sequence dyadic behavior of which the frequency is higher than a threshold. Since each negotiation dyad may have a very different length of transcripts, we adopted two steps to mine the two-sequence dyadic behavioral pattern. The first is to find the pattern within each negotiation dyad and the second is to find the pattern within a particular gender composition group. The threshold of a two-sequence dyadic behavioral pattern within a negotiation dyad is the average frequency of the two-sequence dyadic behavior type, i.e. the total two-sequence dyadic behavioral units of a negotiation dyad divided by the number of two-sequence dyadic behavior types. For the threshold of a two-sequence dyadic behavioral pattern within a particular gender composition group, we adopted 0.3 as a support rate. This means that the two-sequence dyadic behavioral patterns should be found in more than 30% of the negotiation dyads of a particular gender-composition group.

Identifying Strategic Behavioral Sequences. Since we examine gender differences from a strategic dyadic interaction perspective, only the two-sequence dyadic behavioral patterns in which both sequential behaviors belong to the four strategic categories were targeted for analysis. The four strategic categories are integrative information, creating value, distributive information, and claiming value. The final step of data transfer is to identify the two-sequence dyadic behavioral patterns into appropriate strategic behavioral sequences. The three strategic behavioral sequences—reciprocal sequence, complementary sequence, and structural sequence—are borrowed from prior research [35].

5 Data Analysis and Discussion

After translating the negotiation transcripts into strategic behavioral sequences, statistical analyses were performed based on the following levels of group division of all subjects: (1) whole group; (2) intra-gender vs. inter-gender groups; (3) women vs. men in inter-gender and intra-gender groups.

5.1 Whole Group

Table 3 summarizes the communication rate of three strategic behavioral sequences of the whole group. Here, the communication rate of each strategic behavioral sequence type is the average percentage of total two-sequence strategic behaviors that belong to that type and are significant patterns. It indicates the level of popularity of the strategic behavioral sequence of the target group. The data in Table 3 shows that negotiators in the whole group are most likely to present the reciprocal sequence (5.90%), then the structural sequence (4.92%) and the complementary sequence (3.18%). Although this result roughly shows the idea of a negotiator's strategic response, it does not provide information about negotiation behavior in different gender compositions.

Table 3. The Communication Rate of Strategic Behavioral Sequences of Whole Groups

Reciprocal		Complementary		Structural	
Type	Communication Rate	Type	Communication Rate	Type	Communication Rate
1→1	4.78%	1→2	2.20%	1→3	1.31%
2→2	0.00%	2→1	0.98%	3→1	0.99%
3→3	1.12%	3→4	0.00%	2→4	0.00%
4→4	0.00%	4→3	0.00%	4→2	0.00%
				2→3	0.00%
				3→2	1.79%
				1→4	0.83%
				4→1	0.00%
Total	5.90%	Total	3.18%	Total	4.92%

Note:

(1) A→B represents a dyadic strategic sequence where A is counterpart's behavior and B is the negotiator's responding behavior.

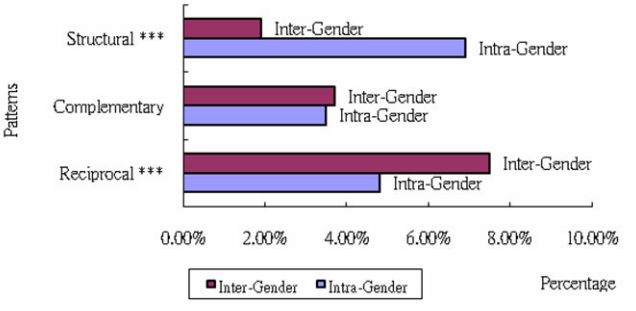
(2) 1: Integrative Information; 2: Creating Value; 3: Distributive Information; 4: Claiming Value.

5.2 Intra-gender Group vs. Inter-gender Group

In order to examine the gender impact, we divided the whole sample into two groups: intra-gender and inter-gender. Table 4 shows the frequency of each strategic behavioral sequence. If a two-sequence dyadic behavior type could not pass the threshold in the mining process, it was classified as "other" in order to correctly reflect the proportion of all dyadic behaviors. A Chi-square independence test was applied to see if there was a connection between gender composition and strategic behavioral sequence. The result shows that strategic behavioral sequences are affected by intra- and inter-gender compositions in e-negotiation (Chi-square = 417.224; $df = 3$; $p = 0.00$). The post-hoc test result (Fig. 3) shows that the reciprocal and structural sequences are significantly different between intra- and inter-gender groups, but the complementary sequence is not. In summary, in e-negotiation, inter-gender dyads are more likely to respond with reciprocal strategies, while intra-gender dyads are more likely to respond with structural strategies.

Table 4. Two-Sequence Strategic Behavioral Pattern of Intra- and Inter-Gender Groups

		Gender Composition			
		Intra		Inter	
		Frequency	Column N %	Frequency	Column N %
Strategic Behavioral Sequence	Reciprocal	1035	4.8%	752	7.5%
	Complementary	768	3.5%	369	3.7%
	Structural	1507	6.9%	193	1.9%
	Other	18460	84.8%	8738	86.9%



Note:

***means the strategic sequence is significantly different between the two groups ($p<0.05$)

Fig. 3. Comparisons of Proportions of Intra- and Inter-Gender Groups

5.3 Women vs. Men in Intra-gender and Inter-gender Groups

Women in Intra-Gender and Inter-Gender Groups: Female-Female Group vs. Male-Female Group. Table 5 shows the strategic behavioral sequences of

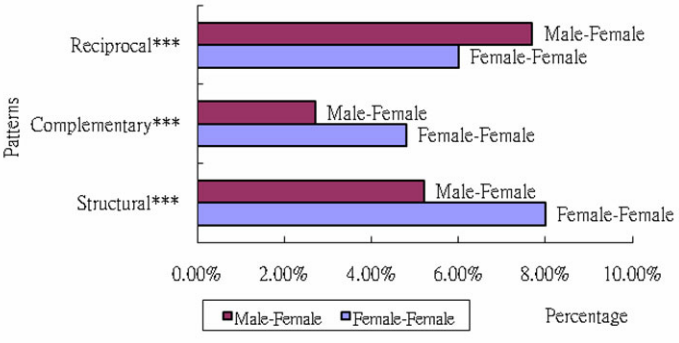
female-female and male-female groups. Again, a Chi-square independence test was applied in order to examine the impact of a counterpart's gender on a female negotiator's strategic response behavior. The result shows that there is a significant difference in women's response to different gender counterparts (Chi-square = 84.340; df = 3; p = 0.00). Fig. 4 presents the post-hoc result. It reveals that female negotiators response to male counterparts with more reciprocal strategies and respond to female counterparts with more complementary and structural strategies.

Table 5. Two-Sequence Strategic Behavioral Pattern of Female-Female and Male-Female Groups

		Gender Group			
		Female-Female		Male-Female	
		Frequency	Column N %	Frequency	Column N %
Strategic Behavioral Sequence	Reciprocal	701	6.0%	372	7.7%
	Complementary	555	4.8%	133	2.7%
	Structural	931	8.0%	250	5.2%
	Other	9497	81.3%	4094	84.4%

Note:

A-B means that B responds to A's strategic behavior, so Male-Female means a female negotiator responds to a male counterpart's strategic behavior and so on.



Note:

(1) ***means the strategic sequence is significantly different between the two groups (p<0.05)

(2) A-B means that B responds to A's strategic behavior, so Male-Female means a female negotiator responds to a male counterpart's strategic behavior and so on.

Fig. 4. Comparisons of Proportions of Male-Female and Female-Female Groups

Men in Intra-Gender and Inter-Gender Groups: Male-Male Groups vs. Female-Male Groups. After examining how female negotiators respond to different gender counterparts, we also examined whether or not male negotiators respond differently to male and female counterparts. A Chi-square independence test was applied, and Table 6 shows that there is a significant difference when male negotiators

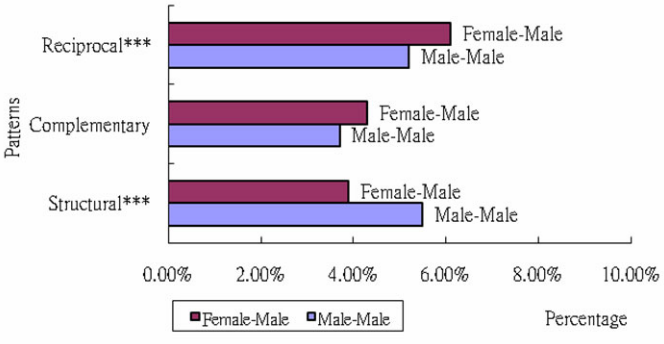
respond to different gender counterparts (Chi-square = 24.432; $df = 3$; $p = 0.00$). Fig. 5 shows the post-hoc result. It indicates that male negotiators respond with more reciprocal strategies to female counterparts and with more structural strategies to male counterparts.

Table 6. Two-Sequence Strategic Behavioral Pattern of Male-Male and Female-Male Groups

		Gender Group			
		Male-Male		Female-Male	
		Frequency	Column N %	Frequency	Column N %
Strategic Behavioral Sequence	Reciprocal	522	5.2%	315	6.1%
	Complementary	369	3.7%	223	4.3%
	Structural	551	5.5%	205	3.9%
	Other	8644	85.7%	4460	85.7%

Note:

A-B means that B responds to A's strategic behavior, so Female-Male means a male negotiator responds to a female counterpart's strategic behavior and so on.



Note:

(1)***means the strategic sequence is significantly different between the two groups ($p<0.05$).

(2)A-B means that B responds to A's strategic behavior, so Female-Male means that a male negotiator responds to a female counterpart's strategic behavior and so on.

Fig. 5. Comparisons of Proportions of Male-Male and Female-Male Groups

5.4 Discussion

We draw the following findings from the analyses:

1. In general, negotiators present more reciprocal strategy than structural strategy or complementary strategy from the dyadic interaction strategy perspective.
2. Comparing intra-gender with inter-gender compositions, negotiators in intra-gender dyads present more structural strategy but less reciprocal strategy than those in inter-gender dyads.

3. When women negotiate with different gender counterparts, they adopt more structural and complementary strategies, but they use less reciprocal strategy with female counterparts than with male counterparts.
4. When men negotiate with different gender counterparts, they adopt more structural strategy but less reciprocal strategy with male counterparts than with female counterparts. There is no significant difference in terms of complementary strategy.

Since the negotiations were done via the Internet only, we cannot know whether the differences stem only from the gender issue or from both the gender issue and the communication media. However, since e-negotiation has become popular and might sometimes be an inevitable choice, these findings could help us to find possible response strategies in an e-negotiation context based on the counterparts' gender.

6 Conclusions and Future Research

This study explores the impact of gender composition on how negotiators strategically respond to their counterparts' strategy from the dyadic interaction perspective. The research data are based on negotiation transcripts rather than on a questionnaire. All of the transcripts were translated into quantitative data. The results indicate that negotiators' strategic responses to their counterparts were impacted by the genders of both the counterparts and the negotiators themselves. In general, negotiators in intra-gender dyads adopt more structural strategy and less reciprocal strategy than in inter-gender dyads. No matter whether male or female, a negotiator will adapt his or her response strategy based on his or her counterpart's gender background.

Since there are more and more available communication media such as video, audio, and combinations thereof, in the future, it will be worthwhile to investigate the impact of media on negotiation behavior. In addition to examining dyadic strategic response behavior, the ways in which that behavior affects the negotiation outcome will be a valuable issue to study in the future. We believe that the research findings will benefit individual negotiators as well as organizations.

Acknowledgements. This research was partially supported by the National Science Council (grant number 96-2416-H-110-013-MY2) and the "Aim for the Top University Plan" of National Sun Yat-sen University and the Ministry of Education, Taiwan, R.O.C.

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