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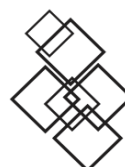
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TOPIC

**UNRAVELING GENDERED LANGUAGE: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF
LINGUISTIC DISPARITIES AND SOCIETAL INFLUENCES**

AUTHORS

Syeda Zainab Shabbar

PhD Scholar

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
syedazainabzaidi64@yahoo.com

Dua-e-Rehma

Lecturer

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
dua.rehma@uok.edu.pk

Eaman Kaiser

Teaching Assistant

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
eaman_alavi@yahoo.com

Tabinda Shameem Jafri

PhD Scholar

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
tabinda_jafri23@yahoo.com

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UNRAVELING GENDERED LANGUAGE: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC DISPARITIES AND SOCIETAL INFLUENCES

Syeda Zainab Shabbar

PhD Scholar

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
syedazainabzaidi64@yahoo.com

Dua-e-Rehma

Lecturer

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
dua.rehma@uok.edu.pk

Eaman Kaiser

Teaching Assistant

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
eamam_alavi@yahoo.com

Tabinda Shameem Jafri

PhD Scholar

Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
tabinda_jafri23@yahoo.com

Abstract

Since the 1970s, the study of gender as a social construct within the context of language use has been a prominent topic. It is often observed that individuals of different genders tend to employ distinct expressions when using language. Lexical choices made by the speakers or writers play on the cognition of the listener or reader and reduplicate gender-related biases or preconceived notions even when the recipients of the message are gender-neutral. Various theories have emerged to address this issue, including the Deficit Theory, Dominance Theory, Radical Theory, Difference Theory, and Reformist Theory. Moreover, numerous stereotypes tend to convey more unfavorable judgments concerning women's language as opposed to men's. Various factors influence the gendered usage of linguistic forms, including employment and marriage prospects, industrialization, urbanization, and social networks. In the realm of education, it is crucial to emphasize three key areas: subject content, the teaching and learning process, and classroom materials. Long-standing traditional practices and patriarchal social systems discourage women from uplifting and persist in perpetuating gender bias. Gender Inequalities are not limited to a single dimension, but they are shaped by a complex interplay across different areas of life. The purpose of this paper is to look at the disparities in gendered language and to conclude if there is such a thing as gendered language.

Keywords: Unraveling, Gendered, Language, Linguistic, Disparities, Societal Influences.

Introduction

Gender issues have been highlighted by many researchers, and they are still doing it. Looking at the studies on gender issues have been done in many kinds of fields including; Gender Inequality, Gender Stereotypes, Gender-based violence, Gender and Education, Gender Pay Gap, Gender and Healthcare, Sexual Orientation Discrimination, Reproductive Rights, Gender in the Workplace, Intersectionality and even in Gender and Language. Gender issues are aroused due to belief and differences in terms of men and women such as; heterogeneity and other contextual variables which influence gender language when they interact in their social life (Shubhra, 2006). Therefore, men and women both are speaking out in different way; where men's way of talking are considered to be more superior and powerful, while women's words are unimportant. So many discussions and debates have been done and researches have been published about gender and language. This research aims to present gender and language with the discussion of some theories that proposes related to the topic. Furthermore, the research provides discussion the relationship between pragmatics and gender in language use that the study focuses on how it helps the influence of gender on language use in various social context including; stereotypes, language varieties and language education (Penelope et al., 2003).

Gender and Language: An In-Depth Exploration

Gender refers to the Social behavior, expectations, norms, and cultural attributes associated with being a male and female. Sex is a biological concept referring to physiological and morphological differences that concern the form and structure of the organism and its specific structural features, such as reproductive systems and chromosomes, which are traditionally recognized to categorize as male or female. Meanwhile, gender, as a social construct, varies from society to society and may change over time. Gender is hierarchical, which results in inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities (Fatima Sadiqi, 2003).

Gender is interpreted differently across various social science disciplines. Within a specific social context, cultural norms establish the values, expectations, meanings, and behavioral patterns of society. This is evident in the representation of gender issues in media like television and magazines, as well as personal experiences. Women are often depicted in roles related to homemaking and caregiving, while men are portrayed as leaders and breadwinners. Additionally, cultural practices such as women adopting their husbands' names after marriage and differences in freedom for sons and daughters reinforce these gendered roles. Moreover, certain schools or academies structure their positions based on gender during student recruitment to align with future work requirements. These practices often make these gender

issues seem normal, and they might go unnoticed as forms of gender identities (Jane Sunderland, 2006).

Regarding gender in language, Saidiqi explains that in linguistics, the term used to denote grammatical categories associated with sex in human language structure. Feminist theorists from the 1960s to 1970s redefined 'gender' to encompass the societal construction of 'masculine' and 'feminine' categories. This construction was contested in its relation to biological sex. However, the link between gender and language predates the women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, possibly emerging as a scholarly study a century earlier (Fatima Sadiqi, 2003)..

The examination of gender and language began in the nineteenth century, evident in publications by women advocating for their rights. Feminist campaigns addressing personal names and philosophical concepts also touched upon this issue. However, systematic research on gender and language issues emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, coinciding with the second wave of feminism. During this period, scholars explored crucial questions related to gender bias in language structure, content, and everyday use. Notable researchers like Cheris Kramer, Barrie Thorne, and Nancy Henley raised essential queries, such as differences in language use between men and women and how language reflects and perpetuates sexual inequality (Ann Weathera, 2002).

These inquiries shed light on social conditions that underscored gender disparities, where men held power and social advantage, while women faced social disadvantages. Feminist language researchers argued that men's dominance in language was evident due to the male-dominated composition of influential figures such as philosophers, politicians, linguists, and lexicographers. Consequently, sexism became ingrained in language, reinforcing male superiority over women. Some researchers emphasized the importance of promoting women as active participants and innovators on the internet to counterbalance men's dominance in online language use (Elisabeth, 2000).

In the 1970s, feminist campaigns sparked heated debates about rejecting sexist language forms. However, Lakoff (1973) disagreed, asserting that language change follows social change, not the other way around (Robin Lakoff, 1973). While some scholars, like Crawford and English (1984) and Wilson Ng 1969, supported these campaigns, citing cognitive biases against women in language use (Crawford & English, 1984 and Wilson Ng, 1969). They leaned on the theory of linguistic relativity proposed by Woolard Kathryn. (1985), which posits that language shapes people's perception of the world and social reality.

Theories of Gender and Language

Sadiqi outlines several theories related to language and gender:

Conflict Theory

According to conflict theory, women's language is frequently considered inferior and less perfect than men, highlighting women's linguistic imitation of men. Such this belief were supported by De Beauvoir (1949) and Jespersen (1924). Alternatively, Lakoff has a different perspective. She argued that women's language inequality stemmed from social marginalization, where they were expected to conform to certain speech norms dictated by their lower social status compared to men. As a result, the expression of women's language was perceived as less efficient than men's due to these societal constraints (Lakoff, 1973).

Dominance Theory

The Dominance theory posited that differences in language expression between men and women were influenced by an inequality in power dynamics. Men, who held more influence in politics and culture within society, were considered to dominate language use due to their position of power. This theory found support in research by O'Barr and Atkins (1980), Zimmerman and West (1975), Swacker (1975) and Spender (1980). However, opposing studies argued that this theory oversimplified the concept of power. They contended that, in communication, the gender of the communicators was less critical than their individual experiences and social status. In essence, it was proposed that women could excel in language expression if they held a higher social status than men in society (Jesse, 1968).

The Radical Theory

The Radical Theory, originating from the Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis and Orwell's perspectives, posits that humans perceive the world through their language. This theory suggests that our world understanding is constructed through language shaped by men. According to this view, women were seen as followers who merely replicated the language created by men, leading to limited experiences and perceptions due to their constrained linguistic expression.

Difference Theory

According to The Difference theory, boys and girls, having undergone dissimilar socialization, boys and girls developed distinct sociolinguistic subcultures known as male and female subcultures. Feminists attempted to reclaim the significance of women's conversation within this theory by highlighting the differences in women's speech patterns compared to men's. Some feminists even argued that women exhibited linguistic superiority in specific domains.

However, critics contended that the theory focused solely on women's language contributions, overlooking the broader social reality of gender inequality between men and women (Talbot, 1998).

Reformist Theory

Within this theory, reformist feminists challenged the use of sexist language, which they deemed unfair and capable of creating biases in representation. They advocated for language reform by avoiding sexist terms and neutralizing language, such as using "chairperson" instead of "chairman," "Ms" instead of "Missus" or "Miss," and "men and women" instead of "mankind." Despite the popularity of this theory, some critics argued that prejudice remains unchanged due to the lack of control over what people say and mean (Robert, 1989).

Feminism and Pragmatics: Exploring the Connection in Language and Gender Studies

In the realm of gender studies, feminism is a well-known term. Its initial purpose was to challenge prevailing ideologies perpetuating negative and inferior portrayals of females, marking it as a pivotal movement (Angelica, 2005). Feminist research primarily centers on gender theorization and the advancement of women's emancipation. Language use, especially by women, has been a focal point in feminist discussions due to the tendency to consider men's language as standard while marginalizing women's speech. Sociolinguistic studies have been employed to contest this viewpoint, challenging the perception of women as linguistically inferior. Initially, research concentrated on women's language use, but later studies expanded to examine women's and men's linguistic behaviors in specific contexts (Angelica, 2005).

In the field of pragmatics, the focus lies on understanding language usage in both spoken and written forms, considering explicit or implicit assumptions about the communicative function of language and the dynamics of linguistic interaction. Pragmatics, defined as "the study of meaning in relation to the context in which a person is speaking or writing," encompasses social, situational, and textual contexts, as well as background knowledge about individuals and the world. When feminist studies explore language use in the context of gender, they closely align with the principles of pragmatics. Essentially, these studies can be conducted using a pragmatic approach (Karin, 2011).

Stereotypes of Gender in Linguistic Expressions

Numerous gender stereotypes emerge in language production, as noted by scholars like Otto Jespersen. Jespersen argued that women's speech is often characterized by softspokenness, irrational topic shifts, and excessive talk lacking coherence. He supported his claims by

referencing proverbs, witticisms, and opinions from various sources (Otto, 1924). English includes certain vocabulary items that reinforce stereotypes about women being vocal and verbally aggressive. These words, such as "scold," "nag," and "bitch," have historically been used to depict women negatively. Fortunately, some of these terms are outdated and no longer widely used in modern English, reflecting changing societal attitudes (Dennis, 1987).

Traditionally, women are portrayed using specific language patterns in various media outlets like television sitcoms, newspaper cartoons, and even horror novels. For comedic effect, women are often depicted as nagging and excessively talkative, a stereotype reinforced in James Herbert's horror novel "The Survivor," where women's speech is dismissed as trivial and emotional chatter. Their conversations are labeled as lacking substance or relevance, often reduced to topics like shopping. In contrast, men are depicted as eloquent, intelligent speakers in public, characterized by logical and rational discourse. These portrayals, disseminated through media and publishing, perpetuate and popularize these stereotypes. Consequently, these biases may be accepted as truth by many individuals within a particular society regarding how men and women communicate (Christie, 2000).

Moreover, specific words are employed to describe the communication styles of men and women, often contrasting each other. Women are characterized as exhibiting qualities like empathy, rapport, active listening, maintaining privacy, fostering connections, providing support, and valuing intimacy. In contrast, men are associated with traits such as problem-solving, delivering reports, lecturing, engaging in public discourse, demonstrating status, being oppositional, and valuing independence (Klaus, 2011). These distinctions highlight women's nurturing qualities, reinforcing the societal expectation of them as good mothers. Meanwhile, men's traits underscore their authority and position in the public sphere. Additionally, women are often perceived as displaying disfluency, unfinished sentences, lack of logical speech organization, seeking approval by expressing uncertainty, speaking less than men in mixed group settings, and preferring cooperative strategies. Conversely, men are seen as favoring competitive strategies (Hellinger & Bubmann, 2002).

Gender and Linguistic Variety Usage

Regarding gender, several factors influence the use of linguistic varieties. One such factor is employment opportunities. Individuals seeking employment are often required to possess specific language skills. Men and women might opt for different job roles due to gender-specific preferences or local and temporary factors. Even in situations where specific linguistic skills are not mandatory, individuals tend to develop their unique speech patterns based on their

workplace environments. Consequently, men and women may utilize distinct language varieties depending on the nature of their workplaces (Anne, 1993).

The second factor influencing the gendered use of linguistic varieties pertains to marriage opportunities. When a woman marries a wealthy, educated, or noble man, her language patterns often adapt to align with her husband's speech. Exposure to her husband's language and that of his family gradually modifies her previous way of speaking. The third factor involves industrialization and urbanization, which significantly impact language shifts. When individuals transition from rural villages or agricultural communities to larger towns or cities, especially when changing professions from farming to employment in major factories or corporations, their language undergoes a transformation from local to more global forms. They might adopt regional or national standards. Additionally, changes in gender-specific language patterns are influenced by social shifts within or around workplaces (Elisabeth, 2000).

Furthermore, the social networks of women and men can also influence linguistic varieties. Lesley Milroy's study demonstrates that the use of local language is reinforced by social connections. The quantity and types of connections within a network are influenced by social class. In working-class communities, where people reside in close proximity, spending time with relatives and neighbors facilitates easier communication and connections. However, women in disadvantaged situations often lack extensive networks, leading them to use less vernacular language compared to their male counterparts who have broader social circles. Conversely, Milroy found that women engaged in more extensive networks and employment opportunities tend to use vernacular language more frequently (Lesley, 1987).

Language Education and Gender: Exploring the Relationship

The intersection of gender and second or foreign language education is a significant area of concern for educators, drawing the attention of many practitioners. There are three crucial aspects within this field that demand careful consideration. Firstly, the subject matter cannot be overlooked; gender-related concepts are inherent in what is taught and learned in second or foreign language education, including grammar and nouns. English grammar, for instance, traditionally represents the pronoun "she" with the male pronoun "he." Language change efforts address this gendered bias; for example, "chairman" is replaced by "chair" to eliminate gender dominance, and "Ms" is used instead of "miss." The language classroom, often considered a Community of Practice (CofP), plays a vital role. Implementing gender-neutral practices within this environment can foster a linguistic community where male and female language are used equally. Thus, teachers should strive to minimize gendered styles while instructing students in

language classrooms, despite the language's normative grammatical features related to gender (Eckert and SallyMcConnel-Ginet, 2003).

The realm of gender and second or foreign language education also encompasses various processes, primarily within the domains of teaching and learning. Concerning learning processes, several factors can be gendered, including attitudes and motivation, learners' beliefs, expectations, and language learning models, as well as learning styles, strategies, classroom interactions, cognitive or psycholinguistic processes, and overall performance and achievements. For instance, differences might be observed between male and female students in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, or in vocabulary acquisition rates. Additionally, teaching processes can also exhibit gendered tendencies; teachers might perceive gender as a significant factor in language acquisition, influencing their teaching approaches. Consequently, teachers may inadvertently treat male and female students differently in the classroom (Sunderland, 2010).

Thirdly, the final aspect concerns classroom materials, which play a vital role in foreign or second language education, encompassing items such as handouts, commercially published textbooks, teacher's guides, grammar resources, dictionaries, tests, and curricula. An intriguing aspect lies in exploring the gender representation within these materials. For instance, dictionaries can be examined to understand how gender-related words are defined and whether they incorporate new non-sexist vocabulary (Jo, 2010). Similarly, textbooks raise questions about the equal and realistic representation of men and women in terms of quantity, social roles, and professions. Classroom materials are influenced by both teachers and students. Their responses to materials containing gender-related issues determine whether they endorse or challenge stereotypes and other specific themes embedded in these resources (Suzanne, 1997).

Conclusion

The discussed points highlight the presence of gender-related language differences globally, extending beyond everyday expressions to encompass proverbs and literature. Women's language is sometimes considered inferior due to certain speech characteristics. Additionally, societal roles influence language divisions, often favoring men. Despite this understanding, limited research exists on gender and language in specific contexts like Acehnese. Therefore, further exploration in these areas is crucial to enrich our understanding of gender expressions within diverse languages.

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