

may behave differently in other societies as regards male and female. For instance in American English, at least, when you call a man a pro, you mean that he is experienced, competent and reliable; when you call a woman a pro, you mean she's a prostitute.

This process of words that refers to women acquiring demeaning or sexual connotations has been widely observed, and has been termed as semantic derogation. Similarly, in English language we have governor and governess, actor-actress, policeman-policewoman. In Oxford English Dictionary governor is explained as a man who exercises a sovereign authority in a colony, territory or state whereas for the feminine word governess, the first explanation is a chief nursemaid. In old English, these two words both refer to the chief member who has got considerable power as the executive of a political administrative unit, for example, Queen Elizabeth I was acknowledged to be the Supreme Majesty and governess of all persons. However, governess later changed to a woman who cares for small children when she is employed by their wealthy parent. Bachelor and Spinster all designate an unmarried adult. Spinster marked for females, seems to have acquired the insulting meaning of old maid referring to someone who is unable to find a husband; by implication they are too ugly or too fussy. Bachelor marked for males, by contrast, has the positive connotations of freedom and independence and still having all the choice of marrying or not. The examples cited above are all asymmetrical, and diminish women rather than men. All the male terms have retained their original positive meanings while female terms have frequently undergone a dramatic downhill slide ending more often than not with sexually debased meanings.

Feminist theorists aim to understand the nature of inequality and focus on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. Feminist political activists advocate for social, political, and economic equality between the sexes. They campaign on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, discrimination and sexual violence. It is the commitment to change that stimulates the feminist analysis and research of language. Feminist analysis is to explore the possibilities of using languages as an important means for reaching feminist political agenda, and they share a confidence in the power of language to help liberate women from oppressive circumstances and identities.

5.3 Personification and Imagery

Personification of inanimate objects arises from stereotyped notions of male and female characteristics. Objects which are strong or powerful are generally personified as male, while those which are weak, passive or receptive are personified as female. Thus the ihiga (rock) seen to be male while the ichoya (leaf) which is lighter and fragile than the rock is seen to be female. In common usage vehicles and mechanised objects are often personified. For instance itinga (tractor) are personified as males while ngari (small cars) as female. Thus statement like atwarithagia gitingatinga (drives a tractor) is always perceived to be a male driver even when the gender is not mentioned. However more objects of less value tend to be personified as female than male. Since

objects do not have gender, it is more appropriate to refer to them as 'it'. The use of animal imagery is just one example where the images of women are less positive from that of men, for example a man is a muruthi (lion), ndume (bull) while a woman is a gachau (heifer), gachui (chick). Thus a statement like araheirwo ndume (she delivered a baby boy) is quite common.

5.4 Sexism inherent in the morphology of the language

Sexism is also said to be engraved in the morphology of the language. In the English language, there has been gender marking practice in human agent nouns, which treat women and men differently. That is, naming practices for women and men are often asymmetrical. In linguistics, markedness refers to the way words are changed or added to give a special meaning. The unmarked choice is just the normal meaning. In Gikuyu language, the naming of male term is different from female for instance a man is referred to as muthuri and woman as mutumia. Kairitu (girl) kahii (boy), guka (grandfather), cucu (grandmother) mama (uncle) and tata (aunt). In English the male term is for the most part unmarked while the female term is marked. It is created by adding a bound morpheme to the male term or by combining the male term with a word referring to female. In English, derivational morphemes are mainly prefixes and suffixes. These affixes often change the part of the stem. The affixes thereby help us to identify relationships within words. The female term is seen as the marked term and the male as the unmarked one. A marked and unmarked term is a useful concept when analyzing sexism. It is a special kind of asymmetry. It is quite common in English. The base structure of nouns in English always seems to be the male form. The female form is always a derivative of the male form. This is an evidence of sexism in English. Often women's job titles have been derived from males job titles by adding bound morphemes (suffixes) such as -ette, -ess and -trix. Take for example lion the female form is lioness, in Gikuyu the male form of a lion is called muruthi while female form is muruthi wa gike (lioness). Also there is mwati (male sheep) and harika (female sheep) and the list goes on. In Gikuyu language a man can be ndagitari (a doctor), but a woman must often be ndagitari wa mutumia (a woman doctor). We are surprised when a professor or an engineer turns out to be a woman, or when a secretary or a model turns out to be a man. Fromkin et al (2007) however, noted that since the advent of feminist movement, that many marked female forms have been replaced by the male forms, which are used to refer to either sex. Thus women, as well as men, are authors, actors, poets, heroes, and heirs. Women however remain countesses, duchesses, and princesses, if they are among this group of female aristocrats. When sex-specific words must be used, one should attempt to maintain gender symmetry.

5.5 Sexism in Syntax

In Gikuyu language sexism is noted in the word order. Usually words denoting male sex are put in front of female sex. It is more natural to place man before woman, as in muthuri na mutumia (male and female), muthuriwe na mutumia wake (husband and wife), ithe na nyina (father and mother), muruwanyina na muarawanyina (brother and

sister), muriu na mwari (son and daughter). This word order not only reflects the belief that males are superior but that this superiority is also reflected in the structure of language.

5.6 Honorific/Use of Titles

Inequality is also implied for instance in cases where a woman's title is not mentioned but a man's is; where a woman is addressed simply by her first name but a man is addressed by his title, first name and surname; muthuri na mutumia wa kamau (Mr and mrs kamau) but never (or almost never) to mutumia na muthuri kamau (Mrs. and Mr. kamau). Other practices in Gikuyu language also create the impression that women deserve less respect or less serious consideration than men do, such as when endearments are used to address women in situations that do not justify such words. For example when a male is being introduced in Gikuyu language he is simply referred to by his name njambi ino itagwo chege (this is chege) this identifies the person as a male adult. The titles mutumia wa chege or muiritu wa chege (Mrs. Chege and Miss chege) however, not only identify the person addressed as a woman but also make known her marital status. The contrast between bachelor and the highly pejorative term kiheti (spinster), used to refer to persons who have never married, makes clear that a woman who has not been married is a lesser being than a male who "chooses" not to be married.

5.7 Use of Non-parallel Terms

There is asymmetric relationship existing in certain words in Gikuyu language. This is seen in words used to refer to males and females. An example of a locution that establishes not just male dominance but the subservience of women to men occurs in the old fashioned but still used phrase riu ni mawatwika muthuri na mutumia (you are now man and wife). This is both a bizarre expression because no one should go about pronouncing someone to be a man and establishes the woman in the subservient role of wife. There is an easy way to improve the language of wedding vows. One may simply use husband and wife. Notice though how odd sounding I pronounce you wife and husband is. The man must always come first. Other examples: ndagitari na mutumia wake (the doctor and his wife), mwalimu na muka (the teacher and his wife) but not vice versa. In the above examples, it is assumed that all doctors and teachers are male. The reality may be that the doctor or the teacher is female. In order to avoid sexist language, Males and females should be referred to in parallel terms such as: girls and boys, women and men, ladies and gentlemen, husband and wife, male and females. One should not also assume that male should come first, so alternate female and male, wives and husbands, women and men, girls and boys, mothers and fathers should be used.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been shown that Gikuyu language is a sexist language. Thus the stereotype for a woman is everything bad while in the same circumstance, a man is always dignified. This shows the level at which the Gikuyu language has demeaned women. This leads to the conclusion that Gikuyu language is sexist: that is they represent or name 'the world from a masculine viewpoint and according to the stereotyped beliefs about the sexes. Although feminists tend to be the

only people fighting against sexism, this false ideology needs to be changed. People need to become more sociological in their thinking and realize this is a problem that we all should be working to fix. Many of us have never really taken the time to think about the effects of the language we use. How it can affect us or our position within society. Think about it for a minute and see if we are just succumbing to societal expectations or are we just more intelligent and more eager to promote change. The challenge to us, individuals, is to remedy this kind of problem in Gikuyu language. Both genders must be given exactly the same respect. All along, we are one and the same because we are all created by God in his own image and likeness.

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