HELLINGER AND BUBMANN'S PATTERNS OF SEXISM IN THE LANGUAGE OF NOLLYWOOD MOVIES

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Abstract
This study investigated sexist expressions in the language of Nollywood characters with the objective of finding out the meaning of a sexist expression, forms of sexist expressions used by the characters, and how the language used in the movies discriminate against women. It adopted Hellinger and Bubmann's (2001, 2003) patterns of sexism in human language by examining three patterns: referential gender, false gender, and social gender in the language of Nollywood characters. This study used qualitative approach and the populations were the movies while the samples were the sexist expressions. The data were gathered from six Nollywood movies between the year 2016 and 2020 (*Moth to a Flame, Mr Perfect, Dark Heart, Win a Heart, Tailor My Heart and Loving Ellen)* using observation and note-taking techniques. The results revealed that these patterns are common in Nollywood movies and are mostly used by the males. The findings also demonstrated the extent to which this language can discriminate against women.
Keywords: Sexist expressions, Nollywood, sexism, gender, language

Introduction

Language is about communication. It does not just reflect the nature of society, but also serves as a primary means of constructing and maintaining that society. Since language is linked with the social attitudes of human beings and is also affected by their social views and values, people's socio-cultural behaviours, attitudes and thoughts are reflected in their use of language. It is one of the most powerful means through which sexism and gender discrimination are perpetrated and reproduced. Historically, our society is man-oriented and man-centered. Therefore, sexism is generally conceived as anything that conveys that one sex is superior to the other. According to Ruether (165), sexism is "gender privilege of males over females". Thus, exposure to and active use of sexist language may influence women's attitudes about themselves, women in general, and the perceived difference between women's and men's status in society. Sexist language, according to Atkinson (75) is a "wide range of verbal practices, including not only how women are labeled and referred to, but also how language strategies in mixed sex interaction may serve to silence or depreciate women as interactants". Its use therefore appears to be a reflection of attitudes that indeed serve to keep the subordinate group (women in particular) 'in their place'. Although it is said to be decreasing, sexist language is still widely used in the media especially movies.

Nollywood is a term used to describe the entire Nigerian film industry. Through its visual stories, it conveys great images of the Nigerian society and Africa as a whole. Although it cannot be compared to Hollywood and Bollywood, it is Africa's most prevalent movie activity.

The depiction of women through the roles assigned to them and the language-use in Nollywood movies still have elements of discrimination in them. There have been issues of concern over the sexist expressions in Nollywood movies. This study explores sexist expressions in six Nollywood movies since the behaviours and opinions seen in movies can reflect the way our society works. The purpose is to identify and analyze sexist expressions as used by the characters in the movies.

Statement of the Problem
Representation of women in every field of life has always been a point of interest for researchers. The language used in movies depicts women as negative, passive, dependent, and subordinate to men. This is to say that there is hardly any movie in Nigeria (Nollywood) that does not contain little or much gender insensitive expressions that discriminate against women in it. This is why this study aims at exploring sexist expressions in Nollywood movies, by analyzing some films that include Hellinger and Bubmann's patterns of classification in them because some works have examined sexist language using Mills' (2008) classification of sexism while others examined using Glick and Fiske's (1996, 2001), but not much works have been done on sexist expressions in the language of Nollywood movies using Hellinger and Bubmann's (2001, 2003) classification and this is the gap which this present study attempts to fill. The choice of Nollywood movies is informed by the fact that movies present the cultural background and identity of the country to the outside world. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the following questions:

    i.   What makes an expression sexist?
    ii.   What forms of Hellinger and Bubmann's pattern of sexism do the characters use?
    iii.   How does the language used in the movies discriminate against women?

Literature Review
The concept of sexism is one of the most controversial domains in the recent sociolinguistic studies. Its role is to sustain patriarchy or domination of male, through conventional ideologies and material practices that repress women on the basis of sex or gender. Most languages are sexist which is due to the fact that many l
anguage communities are built on a patriarchal system. However, the fact that different languages have different forms of expressing sexism makes the research on parameters of sexism in languages to become of great interest among scholars. Likewise Alhassan, who examines single lexical items, phrases, proverbs, popular sayings as well as language in active everyday use in conjunction with the social and cultural circumstances that define usage practices or add gendered meanings to the language and finds that proverbs, naming, social gender and referential gender are common forms through which sexism is expressed in Dagbanli, the language spoken in Ghana. Ndimande-Hlongwa and Rushubirwa (394), on the other hand, discuss how IsiZulu and Kiswahili languages enhance such inequality through words and phrases, and conclude that Swahili language shows sexism through agreement, social gender, idioms and referential gender. Saimon (150) explores sexist expressions in Nyakyusa language by using data collected from Nyakyusa speaking people as key informants through mobile phone interviews and concludes that Nyakyusa exhibits some elements of sexism through five forms of sexist expressions, namely, referential gender, social gender, lexical gender, proverbs and idioms, and agreements. Therefore, it is clear that sexist expressions have been explored using mobile phone interviews, newspapers and news report, but none have been done in movies, thus, a need to explore sexist expressions in Nollywood movies.

Theoretical Framework

Sexist expressions can be seen in many different languages. Mills (2008), proposes a model where she specifies two types of sexism which are overt and indirect sexism, Glick and Fiske (1996, 2001), on their part, formulate ambivalent sexism which is divided into hostile and benevolent sexism, and Hellinger and Bubmann (2001, 2003) propose different model for the examination of sexism in language. However, this study adopts Hellinger and Bubmann's (2001, 2003) patterns of sexism in human language as its theoretical framework. They identify ten patterns of sexist expressions, namely,

  a. Grammatical gender
  b. Lexical gender
  c. Referential gender
  d. False gender (generic masculine)
  e. Social gender
  f. Gender related to structure
  g. Agreement
  h. Pronominalization
  i. Coordination of conjoined nouns
  j. Proverbs and idioms

This study examines three of their patterns: referential gender, false gender, and social gender in the language of Nollywood characters.

Referential Gender: This occurs when certain references in the language are made to a single gender (women). According to Hellinger and Bubmann (8), referential gender "relates linguistic expressions to the non-linguistic reality; more specifically, referential gender identifies a referent as 'female', 'male' or 'gender-indefinite'". This means that a noun can indicate a male, a female or indefinite gender. Referential gender is concerned with "whom a particular personal noun or pronoun actually refers to in a given context" (Motschenbacher, 25). It is an important category because grammatically, lexically, or socially gendered personal nouns may not necessarily be used correspondingly (Motschenbacher, 26). For example, the word, 'guys' is used to address a mixed-gender group or an inclusively group of females. Another example is the use of gendered pronoun to refer to a gender-indefinite personal noun such as 'That patient…he'. In other words, using an anaphoric pronoun to refer to a gender-indefinite personal noun talking about a specific male or female person is often dependent on referential gender (Motschenbacher, 29).

Social Gender: This type of gender is based on how certain statuses are perceived to belong to men only or women while it is not an inherent character of such status (Hellinger and Bubmann, 2001, 2003). It is not concerned with biology or grammar; rather it is the "socially imposed dichotomy of masculine and feminine roles and character traits" (Kramarae and Treichler, 173). That is why Nissen (5) states that social gender is the "property of a word according to which people assign 'generally male' or 'generally female". Moreover, it does not directly label nouns as 'male' or 'female' instead it makes a gendered interpretation of these nouns more likely (Motschenbacher, 29).

In other words, it is concerned with the gender assumptions and stereotypical associations that people assign to different personal nouns. In English, social gender may surface through generic anaphoric references to personal pronoun antecedents (for example, referring to a mechanic as 'he' and a nurse as 'she') or through overt opposite-gender marking (for example, male babysitter and woman surgeon), the latter being one of the means to reverse.

False Gender (generic masculine): This is concerned with the state whereby male pronoun or noun is used for all human beings (Hellinger and Bubmann, 2001, 2003; Mills, 2008). The word 'man' is the main generic masculine term. Mills (89) states that "the most common examples are when 'he' and 'man' are used for referring to both men and women, and it is more common to visualize a male person when interpreting a word that includes 'man' and this might lead to stereotypes of certain occupations". The English word 'man' is a generic term that refers to 'a human being', 'human beings as a group', or 'a male human being'. In society, men are considered the norm of the human species and this shows inferiority to the women race. Men and women are supposed to be treated equally, but it is not the same in the English lexicon where the word 'man' is referred to both male human being and the whole race as well. This shows how women are rendered invisible when referring to the general gender. Therefore, in this present study, the classifications by Hellinger and Bubmann (2001, 2003) are used as the theoretical framework to explore sexist expressions in Nollywood movies.

Methodology
This study employs qualitative method using descriptive design. The population consists of the movies while the samples are the sexist expressions. Data were collected from six Nollywood movies which are *Moth to a Flame* (2016), *Mr Perfect* (2017), *Dark Heart* (2018), *Tailor My Heart* (2019), *Win a Heart* (2020) and *Loving Ellen* (2020). The technique for data collection is done by observation and note-taking.

Analysis
The present study is qualitative in nature. Data were collected and analyzed by grouping the sexist expressions according to the three out of ten patterns of classification proposed by Hellinger and Bubmann (2001, 2003). However, the total number of the sexist expressions used is twenty.

Results

Table 1: Forms of Hellinger and Bubmann's Patterns of Sexism in the Movies

Sexist Forms Explored	Examples and Number of Appearance
Referential Gender	Guys, gendered pronoun 'he'
Social Gender	Female driver, female pastor, female bodyguards
False Gender (Generic Masculine)	Man, gateman, manning the gate

Research Question 1: What makes an expression sexist?
Sexism is not just about statements which seem to excessively focus on gender when it is not relevant. According to Mills (2) statements may be considered to be sexist if they "rely on stereotypical and outdated beliefs, when referring to a particular woman". Examples are shown below:

Exchange 1
Somizi: Look, you **guys**, your problem is not a problem at all. I have told you
 what to do if it is about her hitting you.
Fifi: Hmm, what should he do?
Somizi: Smack you around the bed so you can understand how it feels.
Fifi: You told him to hit me back? Wow.
Somizi: Look **guys**, we don't want any distractions. (*Win a Heart*)
 The statements above depict unconscious sexism as it is usually done both knowingly and unknowingly.

Exchange 2
Roseline: Babe, who's she?
Ford: Who? Joan? But I told you before. She's my employee.
Roseline: That drives you? Your driver?
Ford: Yes.
Roseline: (chuckles) Wow! Ford! Are you Gaddafi? Next you tell me
            you are hiring **female bodyguards**, eh.
Ford: Roseline, don't start.
Roseline: I shouldn't start? Tell me, Ford, how did this happen? Did you
            send out a memo or advert placement that you wanted a
            female driver?   (*Moth to a Flame*)
      In exchange 2, the use of these feminine suffixes is sexist as it decreases the value of occupational titles.

Exchange 3
Edward: I'm really, really sorry, that was my **gateman**.
Rachael: It's okay. I see you are very passionate by your dogs.
Edward: Oh yes, I don't joke with my dogs at all. You know what they say,
            you know, a dog is a **man's best friend**. Yea, in fact, I am very
            good at dogs.   (*Mr Perfect*)
      The expression in exchange 3 above is purely sexist because the word 'man' is used for all human beings (male and female inclusive).

Research Question 2: What forms of sexist expressions do the characters use?
The data reveal the following forms of sexist expressions:
   a. Referential gender such as

Exchange 4
Elvis: But this is really really beautiful, I tell you.
Ellen: Really?
Elvis: Yea, it's nice. You know what they say about painting, right? They say that
      every painter paints according to how **he** feels on the inside.   (*Loving Ellen*)
In the above exchange, gendered pronoun is used to refer to a gender-indefinite personal noun.
   b. Social gender such as

Exchange 5
Annex: Hei! Look at you. You look good.
Desmond: Have a seat, have a seat. (To Kimora) How are you?
Kimora: I'm very well. Thank you.
Annex: Bad manners. Pardon me. My sister, Tasha. Tasha meet Ade and Kimora.
Kimora: Hi, Tasha, really nice to meet you.
Tasha: Same here.
Annex: Guess what guys? She is a pastor.
Ade: **A lady pastor**? Hmm, that's really admirable.   (*Dark Heart*)
   c. False gender (generic masculine) such as

Exchange 6
Nkem: Lucky

Lucky: Sir. Welcome Sir.
Nkem: Is this your duty post?
Lucky: (stammering) Sir, I just come to to ehm to
Nkem: Is this how you are **manning my gate?**   (*Tailor my Heart*)

Research Question 3: How does the language used in the movies discriminate against women?
The language used in Nollywood movies discriminate against women because it presents women as people who should not have the same right, position and responsibility as men. Fi'aunillah's, (148) supporting this view, states that sexist language leaves women "yearning for equal treatment for females and a freedom from the domination of men". The language defines them as less significant than men and depreciates them (Romaine, 39). The language used in Nollywood movies also discriminate against women by derogating them since women are more likely than men to be portrayed as sexual objects through the use of language. Another way that sexist language derogates women is through different connotations for words that may have once been parallel, for example, 'Pastor and Pastor Mrs'. All of the allegedly parallel words for women have negative connotations and in some cases, sexual connotations, that the male terms do not have. Using terms relating to women that put them in a 'power down' position, for instance, 'lady pastor', 'female driver', and 'female bodyguard' is another way sexist language derogates women.

Discussion of Findings
As shown in the results, there are three patterns of sexism used, namely, referential gender, social gender, and false gender (generic masculine). In referential gender, the word 'guys' in exchange 1, though it seems as if it is gender inclusive (male and female), is sexist because its first impression reveres men as one cannot actually say 'what are you girls saying?' or 'what are you babes saying?' when males are involved without sounding politically incorrect. The word 'guy' expresses a sense of solidarity as well as negative feeling. Also the gendered pronoun 'he' in exchange 4 is used to refer to a gender-indefinite personal noun which shows how the English language treats man as the center of the society and rarely notices the existence of woman. Men are viewed as the ones representing all the human beings. This practice contributes to women's invisibility in language and reflects a male dominated society. Social gender is the second pattern used in this study. This findings show that there is asymmetry association of certain social status between men and women. In exchanges 2 and 5, for instance, we see the words 'bodyguards', 'pastor' and 'driver' used as general terms for the professions, but adding the word 'female' to those words when referring to women is a way of discriminating against women which creates the impression that women are inferior and dependent on men in every aspect of life. The third pattern is the false gender. In society, men are considered the norm of the human species and this shows inferiority to the women race. Men and women are supposed to be treated equally, but it is not the same in the English lexicon where the word 'man' is referred to both male human being and the whole race as well. Such words as 'man', 'gateman' and 'manning' used in exchanges 3 and 6 are sexist as they are used to represent male and female as well. The term 'gatekeeper' is better because it is gender inclusive. This shows how women are rendered invisible when referring to the general gender, that is, how women disappear from the contextual landscape when masculine generics are used as a reference to both male and female.

Conclusion

This study aims at exploring sexist expressions by the characters in Nollywood movies using Hellinger and Bubmann's (2001, 2003) model. Findings show that referential gender, social gender, and false gender are common in Nollywood movies. The findings also demonstrate the extent to which this language can discriminate against women. Following the findings, the researcher calls for papers that deal on the strategies for eliminating sexist expressions in Nollywood movies.

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