

Gender Variations in Language Use: An Analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

*Language is the birthright of every human being regardless of gender. Sociolinguistic studies of gender show that variations in the use of language reflect social inequality and male dominance in so many societies. This paper examines how language creates a different world for the female gender, the world of social powerlessness, insecurity, and lack of assertiveness. In the light of this, the paper adopts Lakoff's theory of women's register along with descriptive and analytical methods relying mostly on the primary source of data (Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*). It posits that the language of the female gender as reflected in the works of fiction is a major challenge in positioning women in some sensitive positions in the society. The paper recommends that there should be an alternative presentation of female characters by writers as independent and assertive. This will enhance better positioning for women in the society, which will lead to an all-round change.*

Key Words: Hedges, Tentativeness, Assertiveness, Preferential Markers.

Introduction

There are many definitions of language as we have in life, but for the language to excel the speaker must communicate, that is to say, there must be transmission of ideas, motives, messages, skills, interests, thoughts, from one source to the other. For the purpose of this study we will consider Essien's (2003:14) definition, which he sees language as a system of structural arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which human beings make meaning and communicate, meet, interact with each other in a given community. This means that language is a system of rules and principles in which sound, structure and meaning are integrated for communication

According to Cameroon (1998), women's submissive role in the society is being reflected in language, since language reflects the society, and the society has imbibed the habit of discriminating against women based on gender. Thorne et al (1983), state that the term "gender" does not refer to grammatical gender (the system to be found in some language of organizing certain word class into contrasting categories of feminine, neuter, masculine) but refers to social categories based on sex and encompasses behaviour, roles and images that, although not biologically determined are regarded by society as appropriate to its male and female members. Gender is therefore distinguished from sex in that sex is referred to as a biological component of male and female, whereas, gender component is socially learned and acquired.

Lakoff (1995) claims that women's language as a whole reveals women's social powerlessness and is thus dominated by stylistic features significantly insecurity and lack of assertiveness. She further argues that female language is consequently heavily influenced by the pragmatic principles of politeness which basically rules adaptive social behaviour. The features of these women's language are what tax this study.

Principles of Politeness

Rahardi (2002), sees politeness as how the language shows the social distance between the speakers and the relationship of their role in a society. Questions such as “can you shut the window” are perceived as more polite and less intrusive and abrasive than a command “shut the window”. Leech (1983), is of the opinion that what may be considered polite in one culture may be strange or downright rude in another.

The deficit theory of gender language sees women’s language as imperfect, deviant, and gloss of men’s. (Jespersen in Lakoff 1995) dealt with four aspects of language that he contended were related to women: verbal taboo, competing language, conversational language and conservative language, which he presented as problems with women’s language. Lakoff (1995), argues that women’s manner of speaking, which is different to men, reflect their subordinate status in society. Thus, women’s language is marked by powerlessness and tentativeness, expressed through the use of mitigator and inessential qualifiers, which effectively disqualify women from positions of power and authority. Lakoff stressed further that women’s language style is difficult, lacking in authority and assertiveness.

He observed that women face a double bind where they are criticized or scolded for not speaking like a lady but, at the same time, speaking like a lady systematically denies the female speaker access to power, on the ground that she is not capable of holding the power, based on her linguistic behavior. Freeman and MCE Ihinny (1996), divided Lakoff’s (1995), ideas on women’s language into three categories, the first category is lack of resources that would enable women to express themselves strongly; the second, the language that encourages women to talk about trivial subjects and finally, language that requires women to speak tentatively. Lakoff compared men’s language with that of women as follows:

- Men’s use of expletive while women use weaker one
- Women’s speech is more polite than men’s for example, “do you excuse me” “I will really appreciate if you could take a little time to help me”.
- Trivial, unimportant topics are considered to be women’s domain.
- Women use empty adjectives e.g. what a charming young man you are!
- Women use tag questions more often than men example, you would do that, wouldn’t you? She’s very nice, isn’t she?
- Women express uncertainty through the use of the question intonation pattern.
- Women tend to speak in ‘italics’ (they use more intensifiers) examples, I like him so much.
- Hedges are used more often by women, example, you know, sort of, you see.
- Hyper-correct grammar is a feature of women’s speech, women don’t tell jokes.

The above features have been critically studied empirically by other researchers, to determine the accuracy of Lakoff’s (1995), claims being debuted Zimmermann and West (1987) who focused on male dominance in interaction added the feature of interruptions and silence to the above. They argue that interruptions are used to silence others and that men tend to interrupt women more than women interrupt men. Women interrupting men were often seen as lack of manners.

Women’s way of speaking is often connected with tentativeness and the reason for this might be their frequent use of hedges. Hedges are linguistic forms such as: I think, you know,

sure, sort of, perhaps etc. Lakoff appears to be rather convinced that women's speech contains more hedges than men's speech. She explains that it is because women are socialized to believe that asserting themselves strongly is not nice or ladylike, even feminine (Lakoff 1995:54). According to Priesler (1986), claims that women use more hedges in their language. Her analysis proves that hedges are multifunctional. It reflects the speaker's certainty as well as uncertainty in a conversation. Tags questions, such as "I did-didn't I?" "He was-wasn't he" are also linguistic forms that are connected to tentativeness.

Lakoff (1995), is associated with dominance theory which is based on men's position in the society, with women being portrayed as "weak, helpless, victims of a patriarchy that forces them to act in weak, passive, irrational or ineffective ways". There are other theories that talk about men and women language and their differences like the Difference Theory of Tannen (1996), she compares gender differences in language to cultural differences. She argues that men tend to use a report style, aiming to communicate factual information; whereas women often use a rapport style; which is more concerned with building and maintaining relationships. According to McGlone (1980), biological difference between the genders leads to different rates of language acquisition in addition to causing psychological differences. For example, women tend to place more value on making connections, seeking involvement and concentrate on interdependencies between people, on the other hand, men value autonomy and detachment and seek independence, focusing on hierarchical relationship.

Deuchar (1998), suggests that the powerless members of the society must also be more polite. Thus in communities where women are the powerless members, their speech would contain more elements of linguistic politeness. He (Deuchar) claims the differences in male/female linguistic behaviour is that of social power that men's greater degree of social power leads to their domination of interactions. Tannen (1990), examines a range of speech actions from advice giving, storytelling, reactions to another's account of problem, asking for and giving information, compliments and gossips led her to conclude that while men approach the world as individuals in a hierarchal social order in which they are either one up or one down, women approach the world as individuals in a network of connections.

In analyzing the effect of the language of female gender in the society using *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Lakoff theory of women's register will be adopted. The ultimate is that women are systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it as demonstrated by their linguistics behaviour along with other aspects of the behavior, Lakoff (1995:48). He believes that the distinction between men's and women's language is a symptom of a problem in our culture, and not primarily the problem itself.

The theory of female register propounded by Lakoff (1995), emphasized that, the female register relies essentially on the idea that there are sex-exclusive marker (linguistic features that are used by one sex) rather than sex preferential markers (features used more frequently by one sex than by the other). For instance, it is the case that adjectives of approval such as lovely, gorgeous, divine are used exclusively by women, but great, terrific, neat and so on are used by both sexes, then it is not unreasonable to see the situation in terms of an opposition between female and neutral discourses. This theory helps us to identify linguistic and cultural factors responsible for the differences in the speech of males and female language users which also

helps us to understand the science of the meaning of same speech by both male and female with different interpretation.

The Novel Purple Hibiscus

The novel pictured Mrs. Beatrice Achike as a voiceless, lackluster docile wife of a successful but overtly overbearing husband. She is badly treated at a point of having several miscarriages almost every two months. She is never heard in her home, her consent is not considered in any decision taking, yet her words are that of a peace loving woman that wants the best for her family.

The early female writers like Mariama Ba, Flora Nwapa, and Buchi Emecheta used the female characters in their novels to expose the discriminatory attitude rendered to women in the society. The researcher feels that Adichie presents Mrs. Beatrice Achike and other women with a vocabulary filled with **intensifiers, explosiveness, hedges, and questions intonation pattern** in order to attract sympathy from the society. It is also observed by the researcher that, the kind of sympathy the writers intend to use women to attract from the society affects them negatively. The way writers especially the female writers present women and the kind of language they use calls for urgent attention.

Using Lakoff's (1995), theory of women register, the researcher identifies a number of linguistic features which she claimed were used more often by women than men and which in her opinion express uncertainty and lack of confidence. Vocabularies like intensifiers, adverbs or adjectives, expletives and euphemisms which according to Lakoff, shows lack of assertiveness due to their social background which makes their language powerless. Intensifiers are adverbs or adjectives which add emphasis to or intensify the word or phrase which follows it, e.g. very, so, much, vastly. Numerous documents show that women compared with men, use more intensifiers to strengthen what they want to express. Some adverbs like awfully, pretty, terrible, vastly, nice, quite, and so, are more easily found in women's language.

In analyzing the talk-exchange in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* the female characters are selected in a dialogue conversation; the excerpts below indicate their use of intensifiers. Ezinne and Kambili are young female characters in secondary school, and their conversation goes thus:

Ezinne: Why did your father come this morning?

Kambili: I...I..., He wanted to see my class.

Ezinne: You look **a lot** like him. I mean you are not big, but the feature and the complexion are the same.

Kambili: Yes.

Ezinne: I heard Chinwe took the first position from you last term abi?

Kambili: Yes.

Ezinne: I'm sure your parents didn't mind. Ah ah! You have been coming first since we started, class one Chinwe said her father took her to London.

Kambili: 'Oh'

Ezinne: I came fifth and it was an improvement for me because I came eight the term before. You know, our class is a **very** competitive. I used to **always** come first in my primary

school. Chinwe **just** want you to talk to her first. You know, she started calling you backyard snob because you don't talk to anybody. She said **just** because your father owns a newspaper and **all** those factories does not mean you have to feel **too** big because her father is rich **too**.

Kambili: I don't feel **too** big.

Ezinne: **Like** today, at the assembly she said you were feeling **too** big, that was why you didn't start the pledge the first time Mother Lucy called you. If you talk to people, maybe it will make them know that you are **really** not a snob.

Kambili: I **just** like running (pg. 57-59).

Conversation II

In this conversation, the interlocutors are the elderly women, Beatrice the wife of Mr. Eugene and Ifeoma her sister in-law, who is also a mother of four children and a lecturer.

Beatrice: Eugene is arranging for extra chairs to be put outside, **especially** on Christmas day.

So many people have come **already**.

Ifeoma: You know, our people have no other work at Christmas than to go from house to house.

Beatrice: When will you take the Children to their father's hometown?

Ifeoma: Perhaps today, although I don't have the strength for Ifediora's family right now. They eat **more and more** shit every year. (pg. 81-82).

Conversation III

This conversation is between an elderly woman, Auntie Ifeoma and the younger girls. In a talk exchange.

Ifeoma: You will like father Amadi, Kambili, he's new at your chaplaincy, but he is so popular with everybody on campus **already**. He has invitation to eat in everybody's house.

Amaka: I think he connects with our family the **most**.

Ifeoma: Amaka is **so** protective of him.

Amaka: Papa Nnukwu **really** worried about having a proper funeral, **now** I know he will rest in peace. Uncle Eugene gave Mom **so** much money she's buying seven cows for the funeral.

Kambili: That's nice.

Amaka: You have become father Amadi's sweetheart, he was **really** worried when you were sick. He talked about you **so** much. And (I know), it wasn't just priestly concern.

Amaka: You have a crush on him, don't you?

Kambili: Yes (pg. 84).

The above excerpts are conversational carried out by a few female characters in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. The young and the elderly women conversations are selected to represent the females

of all levels, educated like Aunty Ifeoma (a lecturer) house wife (Beatrice) student (Kambili, Ezinne and Amaka). The underlined words in the sentences are the intensifiers. The writer presents those as evidences that intensifiers are used by female in conversation to put emphasis on and strengthen what they want to express to make their language seems more powerful as it is not always regarded as such (Lakoff 1995). The intensifiers like really, so, too, just, very always and other repetition of words like “more and more” and earlier and earlier” are for emphasis. According to Jespersen (1986) in Lakoff (1995), there are greater differences in the way the sexes use the adverbs and the adjectives. Females are likely to use more adverbs and adjectives in a conversation than male because they have been socialized to use language to consolidate friendship and soften conversation.

The Euphemism and polite use of words by women which is presented in the following conversation between Aunty Ifeoma and Beatrice. Both women are married with grown up children. According to (Jespersen 1922 in Lakoff 1995) states that women use euphemism and polite languages more frequent, he sees it as one of the ways to use implicit, vague expression to substitute for unpleasant expressions. He is of the opinion that women are euphemistic, exercising “a great and universal influence on linguistic development through their instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expression and their preference for refined veiled and indirect expression”. The following conversations below indicate euphemism and polite conversation.

Conversation IV

Ifeoma: Nwanyem, come and sit down.

Beatrice: I am well, very well I have been helping the wives of Umunna with the cooking.

Ifeoma: Come and sit down, come and sit down and rest. The wives of Umunna can look for the salt themselves and find it. **After all, they are all here to take from you, to wrap meat in banana leaves when nobody is looking and then sneak it**

home.

Beatrice: Eugene is arranging for extra chairs to be put out, especially on Christmas day, so many people have come already.

Ifeoma: You know, **our people have no other work at Christmas than to go from house to house.**

Beatrice: **People do not always talk with sense.** But it is good that children go especially the boys.

They need to know their father’s homestead and the members of their father’s Umunna.

Ifeoma: I honestly do not know how Ifediora came from an Umunna like that. Nwanyem, sometimes life begins when marriage ends.

Beatrice: **You and your university talk.** Is that what you tell your students? (pg. 82-83)

Conversation V

Aunty Ifeoma the lecturer and her colleague Chiaku in a talk-exchange.

Ifeoma: I talked to Phillipa the other day.

Chiaku: Oh how is she, how is Oyingbo land (white man's land) treating her?

Ifeoma: She is well.

Chiaku: **And life as a second class citizen in America?**

Ifeoma: Chiaku, **your sarcasm is unbecoming.**

Chiaku: But it is true. All my years in Cambridge, **I was a monkey who had enveloped the ability to reason** (pg249).

Euphemism and polite conversation are mostly used by women to give vague expression and to substitute for unpleasant expression. Like Aunty Ifeoma instead of saying that the villagers are idlers, she said in a polite form "people don't have work to do at Christmas". Chiaku also "like of a second class citizen in America" trying to make the statement sound pleasant. According to Lakoff (1995) and Priesler (1986), women's speech contains more hedges and tag questions than men's speech. They are of the opinion that tag questions are linguistic form of tentativeness, that women express uncertainty through the use of question intonation pattern.

The following female conversations from *Purple Hibiscus* show the level which women use tag questions in the conversations, the conversation between the young girls: Ezinne and Kambili (secondary school girls) and the elderly women too (Beatrice and Ifeoma).

Conversation VI

Kambili and Ezinne (school mates)

Kambili: Did you travel?

Ezinne: **Me?** O di egwu. Its people like you and Gabriella and Chinwe who travel, people with rich parents. I heard Chinwe took the first position from you last term **abi?** (Isn't it).

Kambili: Yes (pg.: 57)

Conversation VII

Aunty Ifeoma and Beatrice. (Ifeoma the lecturer and Beatrice a full-time house wife).

Ifeoma: Nwanye m, who are these **for?**

Beatrice: You and the children. Did you not say the children are coming soon, **Okwia?** (Isn't it?).

Eugene will not let the children go to a heathen festival.

Ifeoma: Heathen festival **kwa?** (Are you sure?).

Beatrice: Did our own ummuna not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his status cannot have just two children? If people like you have not been on my side then...

Ifeoma: Stop it, stop being grateful. If Eugene had done that, he would have been the looser, not you.

Beatrice: So you say. A woman with children and no husband, **what is that?** (pg83)

Lakoff (1995) is of the opinion that question intonation pattern as one of the linguistic forms that are associated with tentativeness. According to him, question intonation pattern which expresses uncertainty makes the language less powerful. The female character in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* has used this linguistic feature to express certainty or uncertainty. It is observed that questions pattern used by female characters only seek agreement with the hearer or audience. The linguistic forms used in Igbo language like "Abi, kwa, okwia, added more intensity to the statement to the statement or utterances.

The last linguistic feature that is mostly associated with women according to Lakoff (1995), that need to be considered here is the "Hedges". Hedges are words that convey the sense that the speaker is uncertain about what he/she is saying, (pan 2011), or cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement, such as "kind of", "sort of", "you know", "I think", "I suppose", and "I guess" etc.

Conversation VIII

The conversation between Ezinne and Kambili

Ezinne: **I heard** Chinwe took the first position from you last term abi?

Kambili: Yes

Ezinne: **I'm sure** your parents didn't mind. Ah ah! You have been coming first since we started, class one. I came fifth and it was an improvement for me because I came eight the term before. **You know**, our class is a very **competitive**. **You know**, she started calling you backyard snob because you don't talk to anybody. (pg. 57-59).

Conversation IX

(Beatrice and Ifeoma)

Beatrice: When will you take the Children to their father's hometown?

Ifeoma: **Perhaps** today, although I don't have the strength for Ifediora's family right now. But they marry earlier and earlier these days. What is the use of a degree they ask me, when we cannot find a job after graduation.

Beatrice: **At least** somebody will take care of them when they marry.

Ifeoma: **I don't know** who will take care of whom. **I honestly do not know** how Ifediora came from an umunna like that.

Beatrice: Umunna will always say hurtful things. (pg. 81-82).

Male Conversations

Conversation I

Mr. Eugene and an old man.

Mr. Eugene: What is he doing in my house? What is Anikwena doing in my house? What is a worshipper of idols doing in my house? **Leave my house now!**

The old man: Do you know that I am your father's age group? Do you know I sucked my mother's breast when your father sucked his mother's?

Mr. Eugene: **Leave my house!**

Old Man: Ifukwa gi you are a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave. (pg. 77-78).

Conversation II

Mr. Eugene and Jaja (his son)

Mr. Eugene: Jaja you did not go to communion.

Jaja: The wafer gives me bad breath.

Mr. Eugene: We call it the host because 'host' came to capturing the essence, the sacredness of Christ's body. Wafer was too circular.

Jaja: And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me.

Mr. Eugene: It is the body of our Lord. You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord, it is death, and you know that.

Jaja: **Then I will die; then I will die.** (pg. 14-15)

Conversation III

Mr. Eugene and Jaja

At the dining table, eating and drinking expecting compliments from everybody (Mr. Eugene)

Mr. Eugene (Papa): Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, have you no words in your mouth. **Have you nothing to say Jaja?**

Jaja: Mba, **there are no words in my mouth.**

Mr. Eugene (Papa): What?

Jaja: I have nothing to say. (pg. 27-28)

Male and Female Conversations

Conversation I

Jaja and his sister Kambili

Kambili: Mama is pregnant. Yes she's due in October.

Jaja: We will take care of the baby; **we will protect him.**

Kambili: How do you know it will be a he?

Jaja: I feel it. What do you think?

Kambili: I don't know. (pg. 31)

Conversation II

Mr. Eugene and Beatrice (the wife)

Mr. Eugene: We always dropped in to visit Father Benedict after mass.

Beatrice: Let me stay in the car and wait, biko I feel vomit in my throat.

Mr. Eugene: Are you sure you want to stay in the car?

Beatrice: My body does not feel right.

Mr. Eugene: **I asked if you were sure you wanted to stay in the car.**

Beatrice: I'll come with you; it's really not that bad. (pg. 37-38)

Conversation III

Mr. Eugene and Yewande Coker (wife of the editor)

Yewande Coker: They have taken him.

Mr. Eugene: Yewande, Yewande.

Yewande Coker: What will I do Sir? I have three children, one is still sucking my breast! How will I raise them alone?!

Mr. Eugene: Yewande don't talk that way, Ade will be fine, **I promise you.** Ade will

be fine. (pg.49).

Conversation IV

Mr. Eugene and Ifeoma (His sister)

- Ifeoma: Eugene I was saying that Jaja and Kambili should spend some time with me tomorrow “Eugene!”
- Eugene: Where do you want to take them?
- Ifeoma: Just look around.
- Eugene: Sightseeing?
- Ifeoma: Let the children come with us. Is it not Christmas that we are celebrating; eh? The children have never really spent time with one another. Imakwa, my little one, Chima, does not even know Kambili’s name.
- Eugene: Okay. They can go with you, but you know I don’t want my children near anything ungodly. If you drive past mmuo, keep your windows up.
- Ifeoma: I have heard you Eugene.
- Eugene: **Why don’t we all have lunch on Christmas day?** The children can spend time together then.
- Ifeoma: You know the children and I spend Christmas with their Papa Nnukwu.
- Eugene: What do idol worshippers know about Christmas? Okay, the children and I will come in on Christmas day. (pg. 81)o

Conversation V

Ifeoma and Papa Nnukwu (Her Father)

- Papa Nnukwu: My son owns that house that can fit in every man in Abba, and yet many times I have nothing to put on my plate. I should not have let him follow those missionaries.
- Ifeoma: Nna anyi, it was not the missionaries, did I not go to the missionary school too?
- Papa Nnukwu: But you are a woman. **You do not count.**
- Ifeoma: Eh? So I don’t count? Has Eugene ever asked about your aching leg? If I do not count, then I will stop asking if you rose well in the morning.
- Papa Nnukwu: Then my spirit will haunt you when I join the ancestors.
- Ifeoma: It will haunt Eugene first (pg. 91).

Discussion

Coates and Cameron (1998), claim that men’s conversational style is based on competitiveness. Adichie presents Eugene the husband of Beatrice with the style of competitiveness. He was mirrored talking about standard newspaper (pg.33) being more current than other newspapers. He promised Mrs. Coker that her husband will be fine after being arrested by the soldiers (pg. 45). He tried to out-do every church member especially at the time of harvest (pg. 62) and in his village during Christmas. He makes the unbeliever to feel inferior.

Coates and Cameron (1998), stressed that women have a more cooperative conversation style aims to maintain a social relationship, thus their goal of consolidating friendship is reflected

in how they talk, as it is in the conversation between Ifeoma and Beatrice “stop being grateful”. Most of the conversations between the women were mirrored by Adichie in her *Purple Hibiscus* like the conversation of Kambili, Ifeoma, Amaka, Ezinne and Chiaku can be seen as aiming at maintaining social relationships and consolidating friendship. Their speech action ranges from advice-giving, story-telling, reaction to another account of problem, asking for and giving information, gossip etc. This led Tannen (1990), to conclude that women approach the world as individual in a network of connection.

The picture created about women and their language use indicates the state of powerlessness, insecurity and lack of assertiveness. Adichie in her *Purple Hibiscus* mirrored women as lacking social power especially when Papa Nnukwu (Ifeoma’s father) told her that she does not count (pg. 91). Ifeoma is a lecturer, and the only person that takes care of her father’s welfare. His only son abandoned him because he did not believe in his God. Ifeoma is a widow with four children and still caters for him is seen as ‘not counting’ simply because she is a woman. This is an ill representation of women by a writer. We have women in politics in Africa, Europe, and all over the world now. There are female presidents in some countries like Liberia and Malawi, we also have some female prime ministers like Theresa May, Angela Merkel etc.; there are female senators and ministers in Nigeria like Diase Madueke, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Senator Uche Ekwunife etc. Vice Chancellors and professors in the universities. The state of social powerlessness of women using their choice of language is not a good representation of women.

The notion of assertiveness is uncalled for in the presentation of women using their language. Mr. Eugene was seen asking wife “are you sure you want to stay in the car”? When she actually said she wanted to stay because, she was not feeling alright. “I will come with you, it is not really that bad” (pg. 37). Why can’t she be pictured as standing on her words as relaxing in the car while the husband drops to visit whosoever he wants visit?

A woman should be represented as one that can stand on her words. There are women in authorities that stand on their decision. The issue of insecurity as presented by Adichie in her *Purple Hibiscus*: is uncalled for, like the representation of Yewande Coker crying over the security of her children when she learnt her husband (the editor) was arrested by the soldiers “what will I do Sir, I have three children, one is still sucking my breast, how will I raise them alone”? Although, Ifeoma is seen as a widow, a lecturer and a mother of four children that are all schooling, yet is not being portrayed as one who can stand confidently on her own without the influence of her brother, the editor.

In men conversations, the picture of male dominance is portrayed in the life of Mr. Eugene, he commands an old man to leave his house (pg. 77). It also presents Jaja a young school boy talking about how he will protect an unborn baby “we will take care of the baby, we will protect him” (pg. 30). Picturing male in his domineering attitude, Eugene is seen in not agreeing with his sister by allowing his children to go with her and her children but ending in convincing them to have lunch together at Christmas (pg. 89) “Jaja, have you no words in your mouth”? A domineering way of asking for his opinion (pg. 20).

The ill-presentation of women by writers had done more harm than good in our society, especially in politics, we hear masses saying, how can you give this kind of sensitive office to a woman? Some will say that either the president is dating the woman that is why he gave her such

a sensitive post. Simply put, that the women are not qualified or capable of handling such office. The society needs a good representation of women by writers not according to culture or tradition but as they are.

Recommendation

The work of fiction especially in Africa reflected the language of female gender differently from that of men. This reflection is a symptom of a problem. To tackle this problem, the society must see women and the way they speak as the same with that of men. The society must see the undeniable importance of women as individuals to reckon with as having great potentials to take the society to new strengths and achieve new heights. This will happen when women regardless of their choice of words are powered with authority instead of favouring a particular gender. Writers should present female characters as independent and assertive, this will enhance better positioning for women in the society, which will lead to all-round change. The researcher also recommends that much be done how women should be viewed in the society as subservient and given lesser roles.

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