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2016

Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR)

<http://ir-library.kabianga.ac.ke/handle/123456789/391>

Awuor, Q. E., & Anudo, C. N. (2016). Misogynistic Discourse: a case study of Fish trade in Homabay County.

Misogynistic Discourse: A Case Study of Fish Trade in Homabay County

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Abstract. *Language plays a major function in begetting and propelling the principles of power, social relations and gender. The gendered roles allotted to males and females are not only overtly stated but they are also enshrined in culture. The unequal power relations that exist between males and females and which promote disequilibrium between them are first noted during the socialization process, where males are expected to exhibit potency, supremacy and dominion while females are anticipated to demonstrate submission and subordination. Thus, anyone who goes against the norm is rebuked. Because of this inequality, women are relegated to the periphery and this has drastically affected their perspectives about the world, their self-esteem and performance in general. This study sought to examine the frequent use of misogynistic terms and images in reference to women since gender inequality is apparent in various domains, the fishing sector included. The Critical Discourse Analysis Theory of Fairclough (2001) was adopted because it attempts at exposing the underlying complex but crucial issues of dominance, injustice and inequality that plague the society in general and the fishing community in particular. This study is vital since there is need to achieve gender parity and to adopt and use language that embraces all the players in the fishing sector. In addition, a gender sensitive language is aimed at changing the attitudes of those who use misogynistic language intentionally or unintentionally so that there is respect, harmony and cohesion in this trade.*

Key words: Sexist language, Stereotype, Misogynistic, Discourse, Semiosis, appendage

1. Introduction

Patriarchy is a sophisticated network through which males dominate and control the social, political and economic spheres of life. Women on the other hand, are considered subordinate to the men and their actions are dictated and limited by the males who wield power. Because language is part of the society, the domination exhibited by the males is extended to the linguistic realm where males use language to belittle, demean and mortify

women who are their subjects. Through the use of language that debases, the males perpetuate a range of ills that affect the self esteem of the women consequently leading to their poor performance in the business.

Butler (1999) posits that in many societies the patriarchal order has selected those aspects of experience that sustain it. This interpretation of reality from a male's point of view has resulted in a sexist society. Therefore, language as one of its social institutions has come to reflect that gender bias. The male supremacy that is rife in African societies is vividly described by Rampele and Boonzaier (1998) as follows:

marriage, at which point it passes over to the husband. In cases of children born to single women, the mother's father and brothers assume control. Widowed women fall under the control of a designated brother-in-law who assumes the responsibility of his late brother, including fathering the children for him. This system confers the status of perpetual minor on African women and has been reinforced by legal provisions of white governments (pg 24)

From the description above, it is evident that we live in a society that looks at men, their actions and speech through a different lens that is raised and idolized as compared to the degraded lens through which the women's actions and speech are viewed. Moreover, women's traits are reflected through those of the men because the society regards the latter's traits as the standard measure. Linguistic sexism therefore can be considered as an act of linguistic violence because it is a situation in which language is used to abuse, offend and even hurt others. As Spender (1980) puts it 'It is the men who have made the world which women must inhabit and if women are to begin to make their own world, it is necessary that they understand some of the ways in which such creation is accomplished.' Since women are regarded as appendages to the men, they are linguistically invisible and the society expects them to maintain the status quo.

This paper explores the misogynistic discourse that is rampant in the fish trade in Homa Bay County and which is used to project the women involved in this trade negatively. It also seeks to unveil the different kinds of sexism especially the subtle one that is characterized by hidden patterns of linguistic usage since it is in such patterns that powerful sexual notions and assumptions overflow. The data used in this study was derived from Dholuo speaking respondents engaged in the fish trade hence the need to give a brief overview of the Luo society. The Luo are Nilotes whose native land is traced around Wau, along the rivers of Sue and Jur in the grassland plains of Bahr-el-Ghazal province of Sudan, the reason why they are referred to as River Lake Nilotes (Ochieng', 1985). The Luo society like most African societies is patriarchal. In such communities, women are discriminated against and they are viewed as the weaker sex. Similarly the language used also prejudices them for instance, negative connotations are used to refer to them while the male are referred to using positive connotations even in situations where both gender engage in actions that are deemed negative by the society.

To bring this inequality into perspective, it is significant to understand the socialization process of the Luo. In this society, the male child is considered superior to the female and the division of labour with regard to gender sets the children apart quite early in their lives. From the onset, those duties regarded as difficult and which require a lot of physical strength are bestowed upon the male child while the simple not so complicated ones are conferred upon the female child. Children therefore grow up knowing the roles dictated to them by society and they continue perpetuating these stereotypes into adulthood; a departure from the norm leads to societal rebuke. At the centre of this socialization process is the family, an important socializing agent that influences the child's attitude and behaviour.

Eksi as cited in Ochieng, (2012) posits that gender stereotypes make men and women develop stereotypically conforming characteristics either consciously or unconsciously. Ochieng' (2012) argues that the problem of gender bias appears deep rooted beyond the language level. This implies that the movements targeting the use of gender biased language cannot by themselves be successful without addressing other key elements such as thoughts and cultures of the users.

Women in the Luo community have over the years participated in the fishing sector in a variety of activities such as fish smoking, drying and selling. Their involvement has helped improve the fishing economy. However, gender stereotyping in this sector like many others has greatly affected their

performance and made them lag behind in comparison to their male counterparts.

Historically, fishing has always been perceived as a male dominated sector where women have largely remained invisible, generally positioned in secondary roles related to kinship, social organization, household production and the gender division of labour (Bene & Merten 2008).

Because of the diminishing quantities of fish in Lake Victoria, some women in this trade have devised unethical ways of ensuring that they get a constant supply of this tampering commodity leading to the infamous fish-for-sex business. In this practice, women engage in illegitimate affairs with fishermen in order to secure a constant supply of fish in return for sex. The couple in this symbiotic relationship refers to each other as *jaboya* which metaphorically alludes to the notion that the two cannot survive without each other in the same way a fisher cannot do without the all important buoyant device.

Wenje et al (2011) further sheds light to the 'Jaboya phenomenon' when they posit that many widows who have since lost their husbands mostly through HIV/AIDS have moved to the beaches where their background is not well known by majority. Such women may not have enough capital to start a fish business and therefore offer themselves for sex to the fishermen in exchange for fish which they later sell.

For the purposes of this study fish trade is diversified to encompass the fish business (inclusive of vessel owners, managers, crew members and operators), fishing and other related activities such as fish processing among others.

2. Statement of the problem

The role of women in the fishing sector cannot be underestimated. Nonetheless, there are many gender stereotypes that act as stumbling blocks and which hinder the women's maximum participation. Of major concern is the frequent use of sexist terms and images which project them in negative perspectives. Since language is a vehicle through which a society's culture and all agents of socialization are transmitted, these degrading sexual undertones have the capability of completely straining the existing social relations between men and women thereby creating an inconducive economic atmosphere in the fish trade. It is in this light that the study aims at exposing sexist discourse used in different domains in the fish trade with the intention of sensitizing members of the society about the implicit use of gender messages and encouraging them to adopt and use gender neutral expressions. Moreover, the study intends to point out that women need to be

empowered, respected and supported and their statuses improved if the war against sexist language is to be won.

3. Objectives of the research

1. To identify and analyze the images used to negatively portray women in the fish trade discourse.
2. To identify the types of sexism exhibited in the fish trade discourse.
3. To determine the socio- cultural implications of the images used to negatively portray women in the fish trade discourse.

4. Rationale and justification of the study

1. This study will contribute to the studies on gender stereotyping in society. It will assist explicate and bring to the fore the current cultural ideology that forms and sustains a subordinate position of women in the society and which exposes them as extremities of men.
2. Harangues against women are common in many societies and imagery such as metaphors and similes have been identified as expressions that are used to promote marginalization and subjugation of women.
3. There is prominence currently given to the study of issues relating to women such as their statuses, roles and relationships with other members of the society. In conducting this study, we hope to not only complement other studies that have been done on language that denigrates and demeans women but also present an analysis of derogatory images used to refer to women and how this has affected their self esteem.
4. The study is expected to provide information for stakeholders in the fishing industry and to encourage them to embark on massive sensitization of the main players in the fishing sector on the need to use gender neutral language and censor sexist language. These stakeholders must also purpose to invest heavily on female empowerment if the country is to achieve vision 2030.
5. This study wishes to underscore the negative treatment given to women in the fish trade, an area not exhaustively researched.

5. Theoretical Framework

This study used Critical Discourse Analysis theory initiated by Fairclough and Wodak in 1997; Van Dijk, 2000; Fairclough 2001. Critical Discourse Analysis, henceforth CDA, focuses on social relations that exist in a given environment and the

way dominance is exemplified in both written and spoken texts. According to Fairclough (2001), language is not only a means of describing reality but also an important part in shaping and determining the reality and the world around us. Language does not exist outside of society but it is part and parcel of it. When people use language, they follow certain norms and rules that have been socially determined and language use affects people's world views and reality. He further posits that language is a social practice that is conditioned by context which includes not only the immediate situation of language use but also society.

Discourse consists of three dimensions: the text itself (written or spoken), the process of its interpretation and production and the social conditions relating to its productions and interpretations. When we produce and interpret language, we draw upon the knowledge which is already in our minds about language, values and beliefs. This knowledge is socially constructed dependent on our social relations and it is socially transmitted. Because of this social nature, language is closely related to power and ideologies making it possible to dominate other people and shape societies.

The tenets of the theory that were utilized in the study are:

- Discourse is ideological and can be understood in relation to context
- Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory
- Discourse is a form of social action that can be used to make transparent the underlying power relations.
- Discourse constitutes society and culture

The choice of CDA was based on the fact that it is a theoretical framework that focuses on real instances of social interaction and it has the distinctive power to view the relationship between language and society; language and gender among other variables. This critical approach also views language as a form of social practice, interprets it from a linguistic perspective by intervening on the side of dominated and disadvantaged groups (Fairclough, 1995).

6 Literature review

Scholars have defined sexist language differently and this study adopted the definition used by Parks and Robertson (2002) which states that sexist language is one that excludes, trivializes or diminishes either gender. The opinions about sexist language vary between linguists. Some believe that sexist language characterizes a sexist society while others believe that sexist language influences society to be more sexist. This study is of the

second opinion and shares the same perspective with Spender (1980) who argues that sexist language enables sexist- world views. Moreover, those with power, in other words men, have the ability to create language and consequently the reality (Weatherall, 2002).

Several linguistic scholars have conducted research on sexist language in different settings like in the family, in the workplace, at school, in the church among other areas and most of their findings reveal that the language used discriminates against the females. Sexist language therefore fuels a sexist social structure that is violent, mean and oppressive.

Lei (2006) argues that the existence of sexist language is due to sexism in society. Moreover, stereotyped images of men and women are based on over simplified generalizations of what men and women should do and how they should behave. Such images are not only inaccurate but also severely hamper the representation of the changing roles of the sexes in society. This study agrees with the current study as it also exposes the language used to oppress and demean women in the society. However, the point of departure is that while this one does a comparison on the use of sexist language in English and Chinese with regard to the nouns and pronouns used, the current one delves on the imagery that is used to deride women in different discourses.

Okeke (2012) also illustrates several instances of sexism in the English language. Firstly, she notes that there is sexism in semantics where derogatory terms used for females outnumber those for males. Secondly, sexism is engraved in the morphology of the language. The male term is unmarked while the female is marked either by adding a bound morpheme to the male term or by combining the male term with a word referring to female.

Thirdly, sexism is also rampant in the syntax of the English language in which case, women are ignored by allowing masculine terms to be used specifically to refer to males and generically to refer to human beings in general. This study has a lot of similarities with the current study since the core of discussion in both is pegged on linguistic sexism but the difference comes about in the sense that while this one scrutinizes the branches of linguistics in which sexism is abound in the English language, the present study deals specifically with misogynistic discourse in Dholuo language with a bias on aspects of Semantics and Pragmatics.

Sexist language is also rife in African societies. Githinji (2008) argues that although sexism encompasses linguistic discrimination of both sexes, we are cognizant of the fact that more often than not, it is the women who are the victims of sexism. He further points out most of the words

used for women are derogatory and portray them as deviants. This, he argues, can be interpreted within the patriarchal order where social roles are biased against women. He also reveals that women are more likely than men to be referred to using words of their sexual organs. To the men, women are regarded as play things meant to satisfy their sexual desires. He makes an important observation that women are not just passive recipients of male lexical labels but are also agents who participate in self definition. Much as this study bears a relationship with the current one since it also addresses the issue of sexist language, there is a difference in the sense that while it focuses on (mis) representation of women in *Sheng*, the present study deals with the negative portrayal of women in the fish trade discourse.

The subordination of women by men linguistically is further exemplified by Okereke (1998) who argues that:

In the Nigerian culture women are not allowed to speak in situations where their husbands are part of a serious discussion and if they wish to make contributions to the ongoing topic they need to seek permission from their husbands to do so either through the use of words or linguistic cues. It is only in matters that are considered petty that the women are allowed to speak freely without restrictions. (p.134)

This study is similar to the current one in the sense that both of them address the issue of linguistic sexism. However, while this one exposes the inferior roles that women are assigned to in conversations of which their husbands are part in the Nigerian culture, the present study looks at the negative projection of women in the different spheres of fish trade in the Luo culture.

Wenje (2015) notes that in many literary texts women have been portrayed in ways restricted by conventional stereotypes. They are widely represented as objects to be discussed, exchanged and evaluated by men. In such representations, women are regularly attributed to particular sorts of character (silly, trivial, domestic). This study agrees with the current study which also exposes the inferior roles that women in the Luo culture have been assigned. Nevertheless, it differs from the current one because while it derives its data from literary texts, the present study derives its data from everyday conversations.

7. Methodology

This study used a qualitative based approach. It employed the purposive and simple random sampling techniques to select appropriate expressions in order to obtain actual sample cases. The data was collected from the landing beaches of

Nyandiwa, Kolunga, Mainuga and Ngegu all located in Homa Bay County. The choice of Homa Bay County was arrived at by the fact that fishing remains a prominent activity in this county engaging upwards of 18,300 people and 3,600 families (Homa Bay County Integrated Development Plan, 2013).

The beaches in the sub counties of Homa Bay that is, Suba, Mbita, Homa Bay and Rachuonyo where fishing as an economic activity is rife, were selected randomly to represent other beaches in the county. We felt that since the imagery used in discourse is based on the lives, environment and the experiences of the people there would be no pronounced differences in the data from the different beaches. In order to obtain a sample that was representative, both male and female respondents were used in the study.

The data collected was in the form of expressions used to portray women in a negative sense. In-depth interview and tape recording were used to gather relevant and sufficient information concerning the imagery, the situations and/or avenues in which they were used as well as their effect. The data was then transcribed, categorized according to the types of imagery exhibited in the domains of marriage, sexual relationships, and business among others after which it was translated to the language of study. The negative images of women as reflected by the imagery identified and their implications with regard to the position of women in the society were then analyzed using the tenets of CDA and conclusions drawn based on the discussions.

8. Discussion

Imagery spice up speech and they are channels through which people's undertakings can be discussed. Metaphors and similes that this paper is based on could be used to enhance an individual's public image and in some instances they could be used to exclude an interactant in a conversation for a variety of reasons. More often than not, the imagery used reflects the environment, culture and thought processes of a people.

Metaphors are part of imagery and they are defined as devices that allow us understand one domain of experience in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 117). According to Fairclough (1989), metaphors are embedded in languages and cultures and depend both on human conceptual and cultural systems. A Simile on the other hand, is defined as an overt or direct comparison drawn via the use of either 'as' or 'like' between two things that are naturally different from each other but are identical in terms of the qualities they have (Adewusi & Babatunde, 1993). A sample of (sixty) food

metaphors and similes associated with different types of fish were obtained from the discourses of both males and females involved in the fish trade and were critically examined in order to expose the way the patriarchal societies have mistreated the women and painted them in a derogatory manner. The ways in which these imagery are interpreted depend on the comprehensive knowledge about the animal enshrined in the mind of the hearer. Moreover, the traits of these fish are then transferred to the persons in question.

8.1. Negative portrayal of women and the types of sexism exhibited

Literally or metaphorically, women can be portrayed as follows: women as mothers, women as unreliable/ untrustworthy people, women as immoral beings/ sexual objects, women as stupid/foolish people and women as wives. The negative portrayal of women as immoral was captured in the following excerpt which was part of a conversation between two young fishermen while talking about a sexual relationship between a wealthy older woman who is their employer and a crew member: '*Dhakono Mbuta ok one yawuoyi matindo...*' (That woman is a Nile perch she does not see young men). From the metaphor 'that woman is a Nile perch, the concept communicated by the word 'Nile perch' is different from the lexical meaning of the word. The hearer will therefore look for encyclopedic information about the Nile perch which entails the following: it is a cold blooded vertebrate animal, it lives in water, it feeds on flesh, it dominates fisheries in the lake, it is labeled villain, it is massive in size, it is gluttonous, it is dangerous, it is cheap and it does not partake of dead fish.

The entries above are stored in the lexicon of the interlocutors but only a few that suit the context are selected. The hearer's relevant interpretation of this metaphor will depend on the context in which the statement was made. From this context the following can be inferred about the woman: Just the way the Nile perch is considered dangerous because it feeds on other species of fish leading to their extinction, so is this woman. This is because such women engage in sexual relationships with several young men who in turn have other partners. The vicious cycle that is created in turn fuels the spread of the AIDS scourge along the shores of Lake Victoria leading to the loss of many lives.

Just like the Nile perch that colonizes the territory that it inhabits so does the woman in question. She does this by providing financial kickbacks and other favours to entice her prey (the young men). These men must toe the line lest she strips them off the privileges. The victims' lives are controlled the

same way colonizers do to their subjects. The women with such financial strength also domineer operations at the landing beaches. Being owners of several fishing vessels, they get a lot of fish that is sold either to middle men or directly to the fish processing institutions leaving other women who engage in small scale fish business with very little to sell. These wealthy women's financial prowess could be equated to the massive size of the fish, a trait that makes other women who are financially constrained cower in their presence.

Even though the Nile perch eats almost all species of fish, it doesn't devour dead prey. The same can be attributed to the older wealthy women in the *jaboya* economy who don't engage with older men in their sex escapades. This is because these men do not have the dexterity displayed by the younger men in matters sex hence they could be considered sexually 'dead.'

Such women could also be branded gluttonous by other women. A respondent noted that apart from almost displacing them out of the fish selling business, they may also render the young girls in the fishing communities without suitors their age. This is because they take advantage of the fact that most of the young generation especially the young men detest hard work and prefer to be taken care of financially. In return, the young men satisfy the connubial needs of their providers. It worthy to note that these women engage in such illicit affairs with more than one young man. Such women could also be regarded villains; just like the Nile perch which sets a bait to trap other species of fish that it preys on, so are the unscrupulous women who will do anything in their power to have any young man that they sexually desire. Because this metaphor reveals the unfair treatment of women and it is also abusive in nature, it is an example of blatant sexism. According to Swim, Mallet and Stagnor (2004) blatant sexism is defined as unequal and unfair treatment of women.

The second metaphor was also captured in a conversation held between two bosom friends as they shared their sexual experiences. One of them was imploring the other to stop the relationship that he had with a woman he alleged had dubious traits and was not even attractive to which the friend retorted '*Kik ise nyakono. Atotino njejore omena...*' (Don't look down upon that girl. That babe is as swift as *Omena* (*Rastrineobola argentea*)). Just like the first metaphor, the concept communicated by the fish *Omena* (*Rastrineobola argentea*) is different from the literal meaning of the word. The addressee will therefore consult the encyclopedic information that he/she has about *Omena* some of which include the following: it is a cold blooded vertebrate animal, it lives in water, it is nutritious, its body surface is generally free from projections that might offer resistance, it is fast

swimming/swift, it is slender, it is tolerant, mischievous and evasive.

By referring to his lover as swift, this man acknowledges that the woman actively plays her role as a sexual object meant to satisfy him. She may have mastered the art of sex, a quality that has endeared her to the man to a point that he would hear none of her shortcomings. Her sexual prowess overshadows the negative attributes that she may possess. By fulfilling her partners physiological need, she is equated to the nutritious *Omena* that provides nutrients and nourishment to a person thereby satisfying the physical need of the individual. Moreover, by referring to the woman as a *babe* the man insinuates that the woman is child-like in nature and therefore requires guidance or even support from her partner.

Viewed from a different perspective, this metaphor would elicit another meaning. The woman could be portrayed as cunning just the way *Omena* is. She is manipulative in nature and will entice men into sexual relationships either for monetary or material gain. Therefore this statement could be a warning to men to be wary of such women who use their sexuality to trap their victims and also those that are evasive in nature. Such women are non-committal and lead parasitic lives such that in the event that they don't achieve their goals they abandon the relationships and move on to their next targets. This metaphor is classified as an instance of subtle sexism. Swim, Mallet and Stagnor (2004) posit that subtle sexism represents unequal and unfair treatment of women that is not recognized by many because it does not appear unusual.

In another incident a female fish seller was seated by herself close to *Omena* (*Rastrineobola argentea*) that was spread to dry. When a group of men saw her one commented '*Mgongo wasino paro mabor.*' (That '*Mgongo wasi* is immersed in deep thought.'). In this metaphor the woman in question is compared to *Mgongo wasi* which refers to the skeletal part of Nile perch that remains after the fleshy part that contains all the essential nutrients such as omega 3 has been extracted.

When a woman is compared to *Mgongo wasi*, it means that she lacks all the good things that any woman should possess. For instance she lacks the warmth, assurance, attention and protection that children expect from their mothers. In addition, she lacks the qualities that a man anticipates to find in a wife for example responsibility, obedience, respect and submission. To be compared to *Mgongo wasi* means that such a woman lacks value she is deemed useless and is disrespected.

This disrespect may emanate from different quarters may be on the grounds of infidelity or irresponsibility. If it is on the former, it would mean that so many men have engaged in illicit

affairs with her therefore she has been misused and like *Mgongo wasi* 'good things' have been sundered out of her leaving her empty and worthless. The society hence looks down upon her and other women who are morally upright are warned against associating with her. This metaphor is an example of covert sexism in the sense that it is cleverly contrived and not easily understood. Swim, Mallet and Stagnor (2004) note that covert sexism is unequal and unfair treatment of women that is recognized but purposefully hidden from society's view.

In another scenario, a group of young men who were bathing along the shores of Lake Victoria were teasing each other and whiling away time. Then one of them alerted the others of the presence of a woman who was washing clothes a short distance away from where they were. This is what he said: '*Kara Seu bende nyalo timo usafi yawa?* (Even *Seu* can also engage in cleaning?) In this metaphor the woman being talked about is referred to as *Seu*. *Seu* (Sudan cat fish; *bagrus docmac*) is a type of fish that has very long structure like threads that look like breasts. At the same time, the fins of this fish can cut like a sharp knife. From this description it is apparent that this woman has long breasts that are comparable to the 'breasts' of *Seu* (Sudan cat fish) and because of this she is considered ugly. In the Luo society, firm and pointed breasts are indicators of beauty. Long breasts may be signs that one has suckled so many children and is therefore aging. The sharp fins of this fish that cut like a sharp knife could also be compared to the sharpness of one's tongue. A woman who possesses such a tongue is regarded noxious and should be avoided at all costs. In patriarchal societies of which Luo is part, women are believed to be chatter boxes who talk a lot about matters regarded as trivial by the men. They engage a lot in empty talk which eats into their time and which in turn makes them less productive no wonder the comment that '*Seu* can also engage in cleaning.' Because of this character, issues that are regarded sensitive and darn are best kept away from women. This metaphor is a clear illustration of subtle sexism.

These four metaphors expose women as licentious in nature. Despite the fact that a sexual affair involves both a man and woman, it's only the woman that is viewed as adulterous in the Luo society. Men's infidelity on the other hand is tolerated by the society. Orwenjo ascited in Otweak, (2015) asserts that there is a gendered view of sexual roles by the society, one in which only females are deemed to be guilty in situations of sexual liaisons not viewed favourably by the society.

Women can also be regarded as people who are unreliable/untrustworthy and this is best captured

in the following scenario: women were meeting for the purposes of table banking and the chairperson of the group made a request that a woman who had written to her seeking admission into the group be allowed to join. Three of the members vehemently opposed this and they even threatened to leave the group should victim be admitted. The comment from one of them was captured thus '*Dho mamano bor ka dho suma ok oling*' *wi wach obiro rwakowa e tabu.*' (That woman's mouth is as long as that of *suma*. She will land us in trouble). This simile means that the woman talked about has attributes similar to the fish referred to as *suma* (Silver cat fish; *mormyrus kannume Forsskal*). This fish has a long mouth. The shape of the mouth looks like it is designed for 'talk.' Moreover, this fish is also referred to *Adongo wuon nindo* (Adongo the owner of sleep).

The hidden meaning that the complainants were trying to communicate is that the woman who wanted to join the group likes engaging in gossip and is by extension a pathological liar the reason why other women are wary of her membership. Just as *Suma*'s mouth makes it look very ugly, this woman's action may also project her repulsive nature this is because by peddling lies about others some people's tempers may flare and this could lead to fights that may turn hideous. Such a woman is considered a disgrace even to her family because she is regarded as an idler who spends her time talking about non issues. A woman who likes gossip is detested by the society since she doesn't keep secrets is considered a liar. A man who marries such a woman is in trouble because as a wife she cannot be trusted since she can give her husband a way to the enemy leading to his downfall socially, politically and even economically. Such a woman does not also play the roles assigned to her by the society effectively.

As a mother, she is expected to nurture the young ones and mould them into all-round individuals since the duty of socializing the children lies with her but because of her gossipy nature she has very little time for her children the reason being that most of her time is spent in circulating gossip. In addition, this woman is regarded as lazy and cannot perform both wifely and motherly duties as is expected of her and when she gets tired of peddling liars and rumours she sleeps just like the fish that she is likened. This demeaning simile was used by a woman to refer to another woman and this thus confirms the notion that in the fight against sexist language some women are their own enemies because just like the men they have accepted and resigned themselves to the inferior positions assigned to them by the society. They also help propagate demeaning references that are directed to them in patriarchal societies. In addition, this

simile is an example of blatant sexism which borders more on abuse.

In another incident, a simile was used to portray women as foolish and lacking in intelligence. This was a conversation between a husband and wife. The husband had left the wife to take care of their fish business while he was away on a journey. Upon return, he realized that there was a shortfall and his wife could not account for the missing money. In addition to that the sale made was not impressive. He was heard asking the wife '*Ang'o momiyo in iming' ga ka mumi?* (Why is it that you are always as foolish/naive as a mud fish?). The encyclopedic entries about *Mumi* (Mud fish) in the mind of the hearer are as follows: it is a cold blooded vertebrate animal, it lives in water, it stays alive in mud when its habitat is disturbed by drought, individuals congregate in suitable micro habitats which improve survival during drought, it is at times found in burrows and underground cavities in the wild, it easily falls prey to predators, it does not have scales and it is not aggressive.

The entries above are stored in the lexicon of the conversants but only a few that suit the context are selected. The addressee's relevant interpretation of this simile will depend on the context in which the statement was made. From this context the following can be inferred about the woman: Firstly, the husband regards his wife as stupid in the sense that she cannot take care of their source of livelihood the reason why the losses were made. Secondly, she is not intelligent enough to detect the cause of the mishap as this is not the first time that such a thing has happened. Because she cannot handle simple arithmetic, she cannot therefore be entrusted with weighty matters. Such a woman is a source of reproach to her spouse. Just like *mumi* that she is compared to, she is timid and her husband must be more watchful of her lest she brings the business down because she is also gullible and gets easily convinced. The fact that she is neither aggressive nor keen means that the husband has to take charge of some of the duties that she is supposed to handle hence she fails to complement him. Her naivety also bars her from making sound judgement. This simile is a good example of blatant sexism.

In another occurrence, a quarrel ensues between a couple because the wife refuses to perform some duties assigned to her allegedly because of fatigue. The husband interprets the refusal as strong headedness and says to this to her: '*Wiyi tek ka wi okoko. Awuoyo kodi to iranga aranga.*' (Your head is as hard as the head of *cynodontis spp*). The hearer must therefore come up with a comprehensive list of the attributes of *okoko* and then choose those that suit the context in which the utterance was made. The attributes of the fish available in the mind of the addressee include the

following: it is a cold blooded vertebrate animal, it lives in water, it has knife like fins which makes it daring, it is stubborn hence not easily preyed on.

In the traditional Luo society a woman was required to be submissive and docile towards her husband. She had to obey all the instructions given to her without question since the man was supposed to be treated as a king. Being a projection of the man, she has to take care of all his needs and attend to all matters that require her attention as the woman of the house without question or complaint. Going against the norm was considered taboo therefore, any woman who proved obstinate was disciplined by her husband and in serious situations she would even be chased away since it was only the men who were supposed to be headstrong and high handed as such, 'two men' would not be accommodated under the same roof. This simile is classified under blatant sexism.

Lastly, two women had gone to see their colleague who had been hospitalized and on their way to her place, they met another fish trader who revealed to them that the patient was not in good shape. This is what she said: '*Dhi une gi wang'u del buoyo nyar Oliech Silibia odhero ka omena.*' (Go and see for yourselves the body is foam daughter of Oliech Silvia is as thin as Omena). In this simile the woman being talked about is compared to *Omena*. The entries for this type of fish that are stored in the mind of the hearer are varied and they include the following: it is a cold blooded vertebrate animal, it lives in water, it is nutritious, its body surface is generally free from projections that might offer resistance, it is fast swimming/swift, it is slender, it is tolerant and evasive (by referring to the patient as *Omena*, the addressee selects those traits that are appropriate in the context in which this simile is used. The patient just like *Omena* is skinny. This body size is attributed to ill health and her health has deteriorated because from the excerpt it is evident that the lady was heavily built the reason why the speaker comments that the body is foam (used figuratively). Since the lake region has high one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates (see Camlin et al, 2013), this patient could be affected by the disease that locals refer to as *ayaki* which means 'the one that devours.' The stigma that is associated with this disease is more profound if the one affected is a female because it is the belief of the society that the only way the woman would have contracted the disease is through infidelity and in the face of the society such a woman is not only covered with ignominy but also condemned, the other causes of transmission notwithstanding. The simile is an example of blatant sexism.

8.2. The socio-cultural implications of the negative portrayal of women in the fish trade discourse

Women still play the gender roles assigned to them by the society such as mothers, wives, caregivers, companions and even lovers among other roles. Young girls therefore accept these positions and continue propagating them way into adulthood. In addition to these roles, the women are negatively portrayed as inferior to men, stubborn, destructive, petty, unreliable, foolish and child like. They are also socialized to believe that they have to depend on men for both social and economic growth. Therefore they not only resign themselves to fate but they also accept the oppressive system and embrace the social injustices meted on them.

According to Ndungo (2006), the images associated with women are a reflection of established societal patterns of behaviour expected of women. She thus advises that women need to break away from the male stereotypical roles and fight traditional forces which have relegated them to an inferior and exploited position. Moreover, they need to question the structure and social relations that have facilitated their subjugation and marginalization.

9. Conclusion

Gender stereotyping emanates from activities which men and women are seen to engage in. From the figures of speech above it is evident that words used by men to refer to women expose the pejorative attitudes that they have towards women. Moreover, language favours males and not females and tends to place the latter in inferior positions. The sexist images used to portray women negatively are blatant, covert and subtle in nature. Users of such terms do so either intentionally or unintentionally in their discourse.

10. References

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