SOCIO-PRAGMATIC STUDY OF GENDER AND LANGUAGE USE IN AMA ATA AIDOOS *CHANGES* AND CHIMAMANDASS *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

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ABSTRACT

Sociolinguistics is concerned with language use in social and cultural context and focuses on how we use language to accomplish acts in our different settings. Women and men speeches reflect their roles in the society, also the kind of relationships they keep with their interlocutors had a great influence on their choice of words. This study investigated a socio-pragmatic gender and language use of men and women in Ama Ata Aidoos Changes and Chimamandass Half of a Yellow Sun. The study adopted a descriptive research design method. This study examined the differences in use of language between women and men from the aspects of predominant speech acts, mood type, language features and context in the selected texts. The study made use of two Nigerian Literary texts: Ama Ata Aidoos Changes and Chimamanda Adichies Half of a Yellow Sun and samples were purposively selected from the texts which were solely on mix-sex dialogues. Few dialogues were randomly selected from both texts and were analyzed. Excerpts were presented in a table that differentiated the male from the female utterances. Findings revealed that male interlocutors used more of indicatives and interrogatives than the female interlocutors in the selected texts while women used more of directives and a little more of assertive languages in expressing indirect statements. It was concluded that the nature of the mood type employed by men and women in the selected texts was more of indicatives and declaratives.

Keywords: Gender, interlocutors*,* language use, mood, socio-pragmatic, speech act

1.INTRODUCTION

A critical distinction between human beings and animals is to a large extent, the way we communicate with one another. Human beings use words to express emotions, thoughts and information of any kind. In each language use, words are constructed in a particular way and it is inspiring to know that when studying, written or verbal words, it is quite possible to ascertain whether a word belongs to a gender or another even when the person has no clue about the sex of the one communicating. Gender has been defined by various authors and the entire definition is summed up in three options: by sex we mean a social variable with two values namely female and male; secondly, gender is the social differentiation of individuals within a continuum between feminine and masculine and thirdly, gender is the negotiable and contestable classification of individuals into categories of female and male based on cultural understanding of the body, especially with respect to sexuality (Nobelius, 2004).

Language according to Osisanwo (2008:1) is human vocal noise or the arbitrary graphic representation of this noise, used systematically and conventionally by members of a speech community for purposes of communication. It is important to know that language is a human attribute, it has a graphic representation which is in form of text, used in different ways by individuals of a society to communicate their feelings, intentions, fears, ideas, anger and roles in different context. Sociolinguistics is concerned with language use in social and cultural context and it focuses on how we use language to accomplish acts like, apologies, declarations, request and commands in our different settings. Speech Act is a theory propounded by Austin (1962) and Searle (1975) who believe that human cannot account for the use and meaning of language in the absence of context because it is vital and necessary.

Different scholars have recognized and taken interest in the language use and creative prowess of Ama Ata Aidoos *Changes* and Chimamandas *Half of a Yellow Sun*. However, most of the studies available on these literary texts are mostly on theme, creative processes and aesthetics. Little attention is given to linguistic studies like socio-pragmatic investigation of the language difference of genders and how it relates to context. However, this study is focused on the socio-pragmatic features of gender language differences as it relates to context in the selected texts. Two gender based texts have been selected as the data for this study, both by female authors; *Changes* by Ama Ata Aidoo and *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie. The choice of texts arose from the need to a thorough and unbiased study

on issues around gender language differences (language features of men and women) reason being that only a detailed analysis would enable useful understanding of this study.

This study investigated different language features of the interlocutors, contexts, speech acts and mood types of opposite sex characters in the selected texts. Hence, there arose the question of do women in all contexts truly reflect powerless language as opposed to their male counterpart? The study adopted insights from Wardhaughs theory of difference in the language differences of genders. It also investigated the gender language differences in *Changes* by Ama Ata Aidoo and *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda N. Adichie while the specific objectives were to: examine the influence of context on the language use of men and women; investigate the predominant gender language features employed by men; examine the language features of women within their sub-cultural settings in the selected texts and to investigate the predominant mood type and speech act implored by men and women in the selected texts.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework for this study is Searle and Austines Speech acts theory. Speech act focuses on language use in a particular context. This theory explains the role of utterances in shaping the attitudes of the individuals in different forms of interpersonal communication which has to do with the actual intention of the speaker and the effect it has on the hearer. According to Austine (1962) and Searle (1975), in every utterance (Speech Act), the actions of promising, requesting, predicting, confirming and assuring are performed. This study also adopted Hallidays theory of Mood Structure, which is an aspect of Systemic Functional Grammar. Mood is a system through which interpersonal meanings are realized within an exchange. Eggins (2004) posits that language involves interactions where we initiate or respond to the act of giving or demanding for goods and services or information Eggins (2004). Therefore, Halliday and Mathiessssen (2004) regard this function of giving or demanding for goods and services or information as one of exchange. Within mood is a choice between imperative and indicative. If indicative is chosen, there is a choice between declarative and interrogative and if imperative, there is a choice between jussive and non-jussive.

Gender and language have become an interesting topic which linguists have investigated over time. Early study in linguistic anthropology (Coates, 1988; Fishman, 1980; Lakoff, 1975 & Zimmerman, 1975) and many others looked at the differences between women's and men's speeches across languages to identify distinct female and male language features. Focusing on the feelings by Lakoff (1975), among speakers from similar social class; women tend to use standard and formal language forms which are characterized by, intensifiers, hedges, tag question sentences, minimal responses, exclamation remarks, polite expressions and indirect expressions. While men use more of vernacular, taboo words, proverbs, command expressions, interruptions, strategic language in order to control conversations and less minimal responses to mention but a few. Lakoff (1975) in his book Language and Women's place concludes that women's language is inferior while men's language is superior. According to the findings, the difference in men and women's language features reflects a power imbalance between sexes. However, according to Lakoff (1975) there are different views on why men and women possess different language features. To him, women belong to the minority group which is oppressed and marginalized and women belong to different subcultures, and their differing conversational styles reflect these subcultures, hence, women's language is weak, hesitance and lack confidence.

As a result, womens language features present women as powerless, incapable of holding power and of presenting their point of view forcefully. Holmes (1992) posits that the aim of sociolinguistics is to move towards a theory which provides a motivated account of the way language is used in a community and of the choices people make when they use language. Jinyu (2014) states that the main content of sociolinguistics is the study of the relationships between language and society that is; it majors on the study of language structure and social context. Bucholtz (1999) in his own view emphasized that what is needed in the study of the differences in gender language is a form of analysis which is less focused on the individual woman or man and trends of speech in the society as a whole, but more focused on the way context and individual mutually shape the manner in which the interaction takes place.

Wahyuningsih (2018) in his study on Men and women differences in using language: A case study of students at Stain Kudus, concluded that male and female students have shown their differences in their forms, contents and uses. Hence, men tend to be more directive. Besides, they use more simple words. On the other hand, women are more expressive and polite in using language. In addition, they use more gestures and words signifying the feeling, emotional and

psychological states. Gender differences in language phenomenon are not accidental; they have the profound social root. Gender differences including language are the fundamental facts of social life and human differences. It reflects a long historical origin in language difference phenomenon. Men and women have different status and play different roles, thus they have different duty rights. Researchers engaged in sociolinguistics explained different phenomenon of gender language differences from the perspective of social structure, consistency and rights. They think the formation of language difference is due to the unequal status of males and females. For one thousand years, the traditional concept of men outside, women inside has dominated people, and men are seen as dominators of status and power. They govern the external world and go out to earn money for the family, women were considered to be weak and only do activities in the family. The three obediences and four virtues of ancient China more exactly reflects their humble social status. A womans duty is to serve her husband, children, take care of her parents-in-law, and do house work. A woman is almost unable to take part in social activities. (Jinyu, 2014). This study therefore, investigated the differences in gender language use of interlocutors as it relates to context in the selected text – Ama Ata Aidoos' *Changes* and Chimamandas *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

2.1   Gender and Language Differences
Not only has gender distribution affected the whole event which happens in the society, it has altered the way men and women use language. There are various theories relevant to gender differences in language use. Ralph in his 1990 book titled: *The Sociolinguistics of Language* examined the influence of social interaction on language use. He also examined the theory of sociolinguistics gender pattern as a tool to illuminate the existing linkage between gender relations in a particular society and suggested different gender frameworks (Ralph, 1990)

Hash (1981) states that there are some differences between men and women in expressive and declaratives. Women pay more attention to the love feelings. Expressive and declarative speech acts create some rules and standards that people use to judge their own feelings or others. Hawkar (2016) studied Gender differences in using language in the EFL classes: From teachers views, posits that there are some factors that cause gender differences. The most significant factors related to students psychological conditions, the students cultural and social backgrounds, and students connection to the native speakers, the students physical characteristics, and materials that are taught by the teachers. 0kata (2016) in her study on Turn-taking sequence discourse: A tool to effective conversation in a related speech of interlocutors" opined that proper Turn-taking sequencing in a discourse is a tool to effective communication in a related speech of interlocutors. There is no particular universally accepted definition of sociolinguistics known to human but sociolinguistics is seen by all scholars as the study of the relationship between language and society. Holmes (2011) believes that sociolinguistics helps us understand why we speak differently in various social contexts, and help uncover the social relationships in a community. Pragmatics is the study of language from a functional perspective, that is, it attempts to explain facets of linguistic structure by reference to non-linguistic causes (Levinson, 1983). Hence, socio-pragmatics investigates the social perceptions underlying participants' performance and interpretation of linguistic action (Leech, 2008).

2.2   Speech Acts
Mey (2001) posits that speech Acts are verbal actions happening in the world. He adds that by uttering a speech one performs an act with his words. Korta and Perry (2006) assert that Austine realized some problems with his distinction which made him replace the constantive, performative elements with a threefold distinction which are locutions, illocutions and perlocutions.

- Locutionary Act: it is the actual words uttered (Thomas, 1995). To him, to produce a meaningful linguistic expression is to perform illocutionary act.
- Illocutionary Act: this is the actual intention of the speaker as perceived by the hearer.
- Perlocutionary act: the effect that the locutionary act has on the hearer (i.e. the reaction) is referred to as perlocutionary act.

Searles contribution made speech acts to adopt a social view of linguistic meaning by making it a theory of constitutive rules for performing illocutionary acts (Korta & Perry, 2006). He focused more on the illocutionary acts classification. The classifications are:
1. Assertives: these are used to express beliefs. They are statements of facts, conclusions, etc.

2. Directives: these are used by speakers to get someone else to do something. They are commands, orders, requests, etc.
3. Commissives: they are used to commit the speaker to some future actions. They are promises, pledges, threats, etc.
4. Expressives: feelings of speakers are stated with expressive i.e. the psychological states of speakers. They can be statements of displeasure, joy, etc.
5. Declaratives: they reflect the institutional role of a speaker. They change the world via their utterances.

2.3   Mood System

The mood system is one of the propositions of functional systemic linguistics (i.e. the interpersonal metafunction of Language), which we have adopted for the present study. It facilitates our ability to account for the various options that are available to the speaker in the use of language (Osisanwo, 2003). According to Alo (1998), the sentence, for example, may be used to approve or disapprove, to express doubt, to ask questions or give answers; to greet, instruct, or to command others; to include others within the social group or to exclude others from it. These various uses or functions of the sentence correspond to grammatical categories which are called declarative (statement sentence): imperative (commands, requests) and exclamatory (exclamation).

3.   METHODOLOGY

The study made use of two Nigerian Literary texts: Ama Ata Aidoos *Changes* and Chimamanda Adichies *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Samples were purposively selected from the texts which were solely on mix-sex dialogues. Few dialogues were randomly selected from both texts and were analyzed. Excerpts were presented in a table that differentiates the male from the female utterances.

The study employed descriptive research method to investigate the language choices of interlocutors and the context that determines their language use. The main task of analysis for this study, therefore, is to find out the predominant speech act, mood type and language features of men and women and the determining contexts in the selected texts. To realize these objectives, dialogues between men and women were extracted from the selected literary texts.

Selected dialogues from the texts were analyzed using the speech acts and mood structure to identify the prevalent gender language feature of male and female and the context use. This is viewed from sociolinguistics and pragmatics perspectives. As mentioned earlier in this study, to ascertain if men use superior language while women use inferior language; the gender language features of men and women were identified in the course of the analysis. Speech acts, mood type and language features were analyzed on different tables to reveal the predominant speech act, mood type, and language features of male and female in the selected texts.

3.1   Data Analysis and Presentation

Analysis of changes by Ama Ata Aidoo and Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Adiechie.

Table 1: Mood Features

MALE				FEMALE			
Dialogue	**INDD**	**INDIN**	**IMP**	**Dialogue**	**INDD**	**INDIN**	**IMP**
1	42	33	6	**1**	50	16	10
2	61	22	-	**2**	53	28	-
Total	103	55	6	**Total**	103	44	10

Key: INDD = Indicative declarative
        INDIN = Indicative interrogative
        IMP = Imperative
        D = Dialogue

Table 2: Speech Act Features

MALE	FEMALE

Dialogue	A	D	DC	E	C	Dialogue	A	D	DC	E	C
1	34	32	3	5	1	1	42	17	3	8	4
2	39	29	2	3	4	2	41	32	4	-	2
TOTAL	73	61	5	8	5	Total	83	49	7	8	6

Key: A- Assertives
     D- Directives
     DC- Declaratives
     E- Expressives
     C- Commissives

Table 3: Gender Language Features

	MALE						FEMALE					
Dialogue	IN	V	H	PE	TQ	MR	Dialogue	IN	V	H	PE	TQ	MR
1	5		23	3	3	3	1	12		38	5	1	1
2	12	3	23	3	2	6	2	10	2	9	1	4	8
Total	17	3	46	6	5	9	Total	22	2	27	6	5	9

Key: IN = Intensifiers
     V = Vernacular
     H = Hedges
     PE = Polite Expressions
     TQ = Tag Questions
     MR = Minimal Response

4.   DISCUSSION

Tables 1, 2 and 3 above showed that women and men employed many language features in the various mix-sex dialogues selected from the texts. Among socio-cultural, psychological, physical, and historical contexts, the results of the analysis showed that the language use of both sexes was done within a socio-cultural setting such as discussions about family affairs, business meetings at the hotels, lunch hours, marriage ceremonies and festive party periods. Women and men speeches reflect their roles in the society, also, the kinds of relationships they keep with their interlocutors had a great influence on their choice of words. However, the topic of their discussion is very pertinent because it determined their language use. This reflects how men and women came about the choices they made in the discussions they had with each other.

Among the following language features: intensifiers, vernacular, hedges, polite expressions, tag questions and minimal responses were examined and analyzed. Men and women use of hedges is nearly of equal degree (male 46 while female 47) to show hesitancy, avoid being too categorical and to make statements less certain. Intensifiers were used more by women to show emphasis, degree and extent at which something happened. The mood system analysis showed that men and women used declarative expressions equally and they used this in making assertions like suggesting, putting forward a point, boasting and making conclusive statements. Also, male interlocutors used more of indicative interrogatives than the female interlocutors in the selected texts. The difference in their use of indicative interrogatives is nine (9) and are used in asking direct questions from the female counter-part; direct questions on marriage issues and love lives. They also used this to seek clarifications from their spouses on their position as the head of their marriages. Women used indicative interrogative to ask indirect questions while men asked direct questions.

Among the categories of Searles Speech of Acts; assertive, commissive, directives, expressive, and declaratives, the analysis showed that women used more of directives and a little more of assertive languages and used directives in expressing indirect statements. For instance;
Olanna: are we still trying to have a child? = she is rather trying to say that it has lingered

Olanna: its the students, isnt it? = this is rather a declarative trying to confirm her assumption.
Olanna: arent you going to play tennis? = she already has a fore knowledge of this, yet she asked.
It was discovered that women used directives in making requests than asking questions while men used more of assertive to put forward their points and suggestions.

5.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1   Conclusion
This study, language differences in gender as it relates to context is designed through sociolinguistics with an aspect from pragmatics. Sociolinguistics deals with how language is a reflection of what goes on in our society and the influence of the society on language. The nature of the mood type employed by men and women in the selected texts was more of indicatives and declaratives while declaratives were used by both genders in the texts to make statements that showed the tone of the interlocutors language choices.

In every language use in Speech Acts, be it assertives, commissives, directives or declarations, it was discovered that men used more directives while women used more of assertives. Considering the influence of the context (socio-cultural-marriage and courtship), where women used expressions that showed their position and level in marriage custom and tradition; a humble person; It was discovered that women used more intensifiers than men. The function of intensifiers in sentences showed that women were truly in control of their discussions with men since intensifiers are possible to:

- Make adverbs or adjectives stronger in sentences.
- Strengthen the meaning of other expressions and show emphasis.
- Increase the emotional content of expression
- Add force to the meaning of verbs, adjectives or other adverbs.

However, the predetermine ideas by Lakoff (1973) about womens language being weak and inferior has been influenced by the nature of language use by male and female in the selected texts.

5.2   Recommendations and Suggestion for Further Studies
There are other areas of investigation which arises from this study that can be explored to enrich the application of analyzing discourse to real conversations and more African literary texts. Apart from investigating the language features of both genders, it would be worthy to study other areas like critical discourse analysis, ethnomethodology of speaking, gender-specific vocabularies, gender language difference in religion, medicine and in childrens world. It would also be useful to carry out the conversational analysis of gender language use of youth in secondary schools in other to re-orientate students on the assumptions that females use inferior language while male use superior language features, hence, helping to build their minds and integrity as it determines their English Language Use.

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