RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
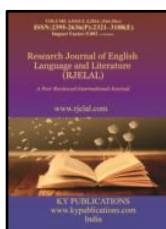SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

GENDER-BASED NAMING VARIATIONS BETWEEN FEMALE AND MALE RAYA TIGRIGNA SPEAKERS IN SOUTHERN TIGRAY

ALGANESH MULUGETA[1], Prof. C.R.S. SARMA[2]
[1]Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, India
E-mail:alga.zelalem@gmail.com
[2]Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, India
E-mail:crssarma2002@yahoo.co.in

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to analyze and describe gender-based naming variations of male and female Tigrigna speakers of Raya in Southern Tigray. The study investigates how linguistic differences are manifested through gender disparity. To investigate the differences, the researcher employed qualitative methodology both in data collection and analysis. The methods used were interview and participant observation. Hence, the researcher has used purposive sampling technique by considering different criteria. Accordingly,30 informants were selected. In line with this procedure, the data has been transcribed, translated and analyzed through the method of thematic descriptive analysis. The data collected was seen in light of the theoretical frame work: dominance theory which isone of the theories in the study of language and gender. It has been discovered that there is a gender-based linguistic disparity between male and female Tigrigna speakers of Raya regarding naming in marriage. The findings also indicate the socio-cultural factors behind using language differently and the ideology of gendered language in Raya community.

Key Words: Language and gender, sex, gender, dominance theory, naming in marriage, sociolinguistic variable, politeness

1. Introduction

A number of investigations in relation to language and society have been conducted in the past decades. Many sociolinguistic studies were made in 1970 and their main concern was phonological, morphological and syntactic variations. At the beginning, gender was regarded as one of thesociolinguistic variables, like that of social class, age, ethnicity and social status. As a science, the study of language and gender is well known after a linguist Robin Lakoff had written an article entitled 'Language and woman's place' (Lakoff, 1975). As Hobbs (2003) stated, in the recent ten years, sociolinguistic researches on language and gender have started to use different theoretical frameworks in studying linguistic forms of men and women. The first theoretical framework is the dominance theory which is related with the power imbalance between men and women in an interaction and the differencetheory, which deals with the aberrant characteristics of women's language stemmed from their relegation in society. On the contrary, the third theoretical framework is based on difference on socialization of men and women in different sociolinguistic subcultures.

As Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003) stated, people have different assumptions about the linguistic style of men and women. In other words,

KY Publications
www.kypublications.com

while men are expected to be straightforward in their speech, women are typically not expected to be direct in the expression of their ideas; rather they supposed to express their views indirectly. If a woman is indirect in her speech, she is regarded as proper woman and she is admired, whereas if she is direct, she is judged as assertive woman.

2.   Review of related literature

Studies about language and gender are mainly focused on whether there is a language use difference between the genders. There are some differences related to speech in many languages, such as English, Chinese and Japanese (Hellingr and BuBmann, 1984.) It is quite likely that as long as language has existed, the language use difference between male and female has also occurred within it. Nowadays there are no languages, which do not differentiate between men and women at all (Prewitt, 2011.) Sociolinguistic investigation concerning gender and sex began in the early 1970.Predominantly two features of language behaviors were studied; these are the speech behavior of men and women on the linguistic features such as on the phonological level and the conversational style between men and women in discourse. Since then, strong pattern of gender distinction has been verified in a number of studies. Consequently, it can be suggested that the language use difference due to gender may be coming before class difference which has a strong impact in linguistic difference and change (Coulmas, 1998.)

2.1   Sex and Gender

In the 1980's, it was usual for sociolinguists to describe their interests as being "language and sex", however; during the intervening years, the term sex has completely been substituted by the term gender. The distinctive base for the identification of sex and gender is that, sex is related to biological category, whereas gender is a social category. In other words, sex is something we have and it can be defined in terms of proofs or scientific criteria, whereas gender is a social property,or in other words, gender is something constructed through one's relationships with others and through individuals' belief to certain cultural norms and proscription (Meyerhoff, 2006).Gender is a social construct, whereas sex is related to difference

between men and women based on biological aspect. In other words, gender is our socio-cultural interpretation on the basis of sex. Therefore, sex indicates physical distinction of men and women**.** According to Coulmas(1998), sex can be defined as the biological difference between men and women, while gender focuses on the social, psychological and cultural differences between males and females. The core question in studying language behavior and gender at this point concerns the correlation of sex and gender. Therefore, several differentiated definitions of sex and gender are in a social construction perspective.However, both sex and gender are seen as socially developed statuses. Sex is then understood more as a continuous sequence made up of chromosomal sex, gonadal sex which is related to reproductive organs and hormonal sex, all work in the presence and under the influence of a set of environments.

2.2 Gender–based linguistic variation of naming

As Holmes and Mara (2010) stated, although in our society naming conventions for men and women are essentially equal (both have first and last names), the social convention governing the choice of form of address is not parallel in both sexes. According to Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003), the prominent aspect of feminist linguistic reform concerned naming practices and terms of address for women. Moreover, the symmetrical uses of titles and terms of address for women and the elimination of derogatory and discriminatory naming practices due to men dominance are the goals of feminist linguistic activism. Women are more likely to keep their pre-marital name after marriage. As Ball (2005) has stated, forms of names are often employed during an interaction to mark interactional power. That is, speakers often locate themselves along the power continuum by the way they name their addressees. According to Martin (1995), many languages make use extensive and elaborate sets of address forms. These often reflect highly stratified social structures which can be constant reminders of respect, power and social status. Japanese language, for instance, has a complex series of honorifics and special forms of address.

The practices around names and naming are suffused with power. The giving of names is

ALGANESH MULUGETA, Prof. C.R.S. SARMA

done by those in more powerful social positions, while the less powerful are given names or are named. This can be seen in the (Western) religious and philosophical example of Adam being given the opportunity by God to name creation, including Eve (Schimmel, 1989: ix), but also in the everyday moment of parents deciding a child's name. In the case of last names, the power is a gendered one. Last names in Britain are generally a father's and on marriage a woman is generally expected to change her name to that of her husband. Thus, name changing is suffused with gendered power and relations. The selfhood of women persists to be understood as secondary compared to men. A certain formation of masculinity and femininity is bound up in the naming practice. The power of the father-husband, head-of-household lasts to be significant to a large number of the male partners in this investigation and thus possibly to others like them. Their wives were also a part of this gendering, some wondering whether they could look at themselves as genuinely dedicated and loving, if they did not follow the customs of marriage, represented by name changing. discoversociety.org/2013/11/05/what's-in-a-name-gendered….

According to Smith (1987), culture is a social construction that primarily reflects the standpoint of men. Further, women in our society have customarily been excluded from ". . . the making of ideology, of knowledge, and of culture . . ." (p.17.) This means that women's ways of knowing the world have not been represented and that women have been routinely disqualified from the process of creating what is known as culture. Smith contends that women have both participated in this power imbalance and can remove themselves from it, which is imperative to the creation of culture, knowledge, and ideology based on the experiences of women (Smith 1987: 17-18.)

3. Research Questions

The central theme of the study is to analyze and describe the gender-based naming variations between female and male Tigrigna speakers of Raya.So,the following strands of research inquiries arise from this general theme. These are;

- Are there gender-based naming variations between female and male Tigrigna speakers of Raya?
- What are the socio-cultural factors that affect the language use difference of the genders in Raya?
- What isthe ideology of gendered language among the speech communities of Raya?

4. Methodology

4.1 Population and Research Participants

The target groups selected as key respondents for the purpose of this particular study werefemale and male Tigrigna speakers of Raya. The selection of these speakers as the source of data was intentionally performed. Theparticipants of this study ranged in ages from 15-80 years old.Thus 30 informants were selected from the three districts of Raya namely Ofla,Kilisha and Tao.

4.2 Instruments of data collection

The first instrument employed for this research was interview. Therefore, the researcher prepared unstructured interview questions for the subjects in order to dig out gender-based naming variations of male and female Tigrigna speakers of Raya.Moreover, the researcherused Tape Recorder and field note during the interview. The second instrument employed for this study was participatory observation. The researcher made a participatory observation by taking part in public domains where people use the language for different purposes. The public domains included market places, wedding ceremonies |and different ceremonial organizations.

4.3 Methods of data analysis

The researcher collected the data using unstructured interview and participatory observation. The collected data has been transcribed and the analysis was conducted based on the indicated conceptual frameworks. The data has been translated from Tigrigna to English to the nearest possible meaning. Moreover, throughout the study phonemic transcription (which includes the symbols that stand for phoneme) was used to transcribe the data.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section includes the analysis and interpretation of gender-based linguistic variation of

ALGANESH MULUGETA, Prof. C.R.S. SARMA

naming in marriage between male and female Tigrigna speakers of Raya. Moreover, it also took into consideration the socio-culturalfactors behind using language differently and problems occurred when one gender group uses expressions used by the opposite gender.

5.1 Gender-based naming variation of RayaTigrigna speakers in marriage

In Raya, man and wife do not call each other by their names before they bear their first child. They rather have other choices to call each other. The woman calls the man by using the honorific terms **/ʔɨsatom/** means 'they' *or* **/ʔatum/**which means 'you'. Here **/ʔɨsatom/ '**they' in Raya is not referring the third person plural pronoun but it is referring to singular second person pronoun equivalent to English 'you'. Singular **/ʔatum**/'you' similarly refers to the second person singular in it is honorific form. As such the man calls his wife by using the honorific terms **/ʔɨsaton**/*literally means 'they' but functionally it is referring* 'you' second person singular female. Moreover, men call their wives honorifically as **/ʔatɨn/** which also mean 'you'. But this way of calling is stricter to the woman than her husband. That means, the man can call her using her name, but she can never do that. For instance, if the man's name is 'Haftom'and if she wants to call him while he is with his friends, she has to say **/səβ s'əwwuʕɨka/** which means '*someone is calling you*' or use his friend next to him to help her call him. But she will never use the name 'Haftom.'

However, after she gives birth to her first child, she could call him using the word 'father' in front of the child's name. For example, if their child's name is Lemlem or Tesfu, she can call her husband as **/ʔaboləmləm'/** or **/ʔabotəsfu/** which means 'Lemlem's father' or 'Tesfu's father' as she is not allowed to call him by his name. The husband however can call her **/ʔadaləmləm/** or **/ʔadatəsfu/** which means 'Lemlem's mother' or 'Tesfu's mother'. He can also call her by using her real name though it is impossible for the wife to do so. In addition, when she is in the house with the whole family, and if she wants to call her husband, she asks one of her children to call her husband for her instead of calling him directly. In relation to this, Okamoto (2004) says, there are a number of different explanations

for the claim that women speak more politely than men by using different expressions and linguistic strategies that show honorifics. According to Deuchar (1987), men often have the opportunity to control language and women are unable to be free from severe restriction of language which is designed by men, but the question here is that if language controls the thought of human beings, then how can a particular group of people seize control of language at the expense of another? Here the concept of power might help to explain why men have more control of the society than do women.**"Gender differences in language are often just one aspect of more pervasive linguistic differences in the society reflecting social status or power differences"** (Holmes, 1992, p.159). In some societies, there is domination of men than women. But, in such community, the linguistic variations between the two genders can be said to be originatingbecause of the social hierarchy as a whole. Holmes provides the example of Bengali where a wife should not call her husband by his first name because of being inferior to him. Holmes gives an example of a Benagli wife whose husband's name is*'tara'*which means /*star*/ but she could not call him directly by his name however, select to call him*'nokkhotro'* which means /heavenly body/. As we have just observed, here social factors interfere in the gender variations of speech.

Generally, I conclude that wives are not free to call their husband's name in first, they feel shy when they call their men by their names. Moreover, the society does not accept them when they use name to call their husbands. Therefore, they have also fear of social criticism. From the interview that the researcher has made regarding why such disparities happen between both sexes in terms of calling one another, the following responses have been discovered. The   reasons for the use of such kind of expressions by the woman are:

- *She shows the respect she has for her husband*
- *Politeness*
- *Fear of criticism from the society*
- *Men have higher status in the community*
- *She is ashamed of calling by his name*

ALGANESH MULUGETA, Prof. C.R.S. SARMA

According to the custom of Tigrigna speakers of Raya, if a woman calls her husband by his name, the society denigrates her and calls her disrespectful, shameless, rigid, unpunished or disobedient and the society feels as if the husband is being called like a street person (very ordinary) as indicated in the following data.

5.2   Expressions used against women for calling their husbands by their first names

A. /ʕajn   ɨt'əli   dɨβəlʕə-t/
        eye   goat   eat-3FS
  Lit. One who ate goat's eye
Fun. *'She is discourteous.'*

B. /xɨβr - u   dəj - thɨlu/
     dignity-3MS   NEG- respect-3FS
  'She does not respect his dignity.'

C.   / dəj -   tɨqs'ə –   t/
         NEG   punish - 3FS
 Lit. She is unpunished.
   Fun. *'She is unethical'*

D. /həmmeħaza- ʔa   bɨ - sum- u   tɨs'wwuʕ-o/
Like   friend-hers -3FS   by- name - 3MS   call – 3MS
Lit. She calls his name as she calls her friend.
Fun. *'She disrespected him'*

E. **/həm   gʷasarɨʔja   – tto/**
     Like   herdsman   see -3FS - him
Lit. She considers him like herdsman.
Fun. *'She degraded him '*

Raya Tigrigna speakers relate the name of their wives with the dowry that women brought. In this case, women are the ones who give their men dowry in Raya. Therefore, the mother-in-law of the men give the women new names depending on the amount and good quality of the dowry. If the women brought good quality and quantity of dowry, most commonly cattle, money or gold, they are given the following names.

5.3   Names given to daughters-in -law in Raya

/wərk'ɨnəʃ/ Lit. You are gold
/mulunəʃ / Lit. You are full
/muluwərk' / Lit. Full of gold
/muluʔɨməbet / Lit. Full house wife
/tɨruwərk/   Lit. Good quality of gold
/belajnəʃ/ Lit. You are above all

Fun. *These names are given to those who bring much dowry in their marriage.*

Moreover, Raya mothers-in-law name their daughter- in- laws depending on environmental situations, the husband and the husband's family.

The names are related to   the greenness of the environment, the amount of the rainfall and the wish and wellbeing of the family. These names include:

/tɨmnɨt /
/harɨfəja/   Lit. I wish
Fun. *'Usually given to wives who married the first son of the families in Raya.'*

/abrehət/
 Lit. Gave light
 Fun. *'Referring to the good luck she brought to whole family of the husband.'*

/ləmləm /
/axəza/

Lit. Greenness of the environment
Fun. *'Named after the environment of the community got green when girl got
Married to one of the member of the community.'*

/ʔazməra/
Lit. Crop
Fun. *'Used when the girl is thought to be a reason for the family to get a lot of crop production.'*

There are basically three reasons for the people to change their names: social, economic and political reasons. The practices around names and naming are suffused with power. The giving of names is done by those in more powerful social positions, while the less powerful are given names or are named. In Raya, it is culture to change the name of girls during their marriage. The mothers-in-law are concerned with the change of their daughters-in-law name. Finally, the whole community used not the original names of the wives, but the name coined by the mothers-in-law. Therefore, I can conclude that the reason for the change of the name of the wives in Raya is social (cultural) practice.

The other social issue of naming in Raya which I found interesting is related with naming of the married men by their family. In most of the society, it is common to observe the people calling their children by names anytime. In Raya families do not call their married sons by their names, they rather use:

5.4   Naming of sons-in-law in Raya
A. **/Wəddə - j/**
   son   my-(M)
    'My son'

ALGANESH MULUGETA, Prof. C.R.S. SARMA

B. /ʔabbo ʔikkələ/

'The father of ….'

In this case, the families think their son is big enough after marriage not be called by name. The reason is that Raya people do not usually call old people by their names. This case is not applied for women. They can call their married daughters by their names. I can relate this idea with the theory of dominance in this study. The other point of discussion of naming in this research is related to the segment **/jje/** in calling their father and mother in-laws. This case is not common for sons-in-law.

5.5 Terms used to call mother and father in-law in Raya

Son-in-laws	Gloss	Daughter-in-laws	Gloss
/ʔabbo/	'Father'	**/ʔabbo - jje/**	'My father'
/ʔɨnno/	'Mother'	**/ʔɨnno -jje/**	'My mother'

From the above data, it is observed that women in Raya tend to use the morphological segment /**jje**/ as a possessive pronoun. On the other hand, men omit the segment **/jje**/. This shows that women use the possessive pronoun /**jje**/*to* reflect the state of politeness in their in- laws than men do in Raya.

Regarding the ways wives call their men, mother - in- laws rename their daughters-in-law, and families called their married son, differs between old and young generation in Raya Young generations call their husbands, daughters-in-law and married sons by their names. Here young, middle age and educated mothers-in-law do not change the original names of their daughters-in-law.

5.6 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the data analyzed, the following findings were made:

Women in Rayado not call their husbands by their names. Women call their men by using the honorific terms. This is due to the fact that in Rayasocieties, men have a higher status than women and wives are not free to call their husband's name for they feel shy when they call their men by their names. However, men in Rayacall their wives honorifically, but this way of calling is stricter to the women than to their husbands. That means, men can call their wives using their real name, but women can never do that. Moreover, women in Raya usually got new name from their mother in-laws. The other finding of this work shows that women in Raya use certain morphological segments to show high degree of intimacy than their husbands to call their mother and father in-laws. Generally, women in Rayaare subject to social criticism if they violate the custom of their respective way of naming. When we look at the way men in Rayacall their father and mother in-laws, they do not bother to use intimacy morphemes like the women use. Age and level of education also play an important role in the language use variation of naming between the genders.

5.8 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the researcher would like to forward the following recommendations:

Regarding language use disparity based on gender, the society unfairly gives more value to men than to women. Hence to change this unfair language usage in the society, awareness raising programs should be carried out in Raya and Agame society speech community. Organizations such as Women's affairs office and others have to promote the concept of gender equality by preparing seminars, workshops and other media.

Further researches are necessary to explore the issue of gender and language in Tigrigna and other Ethiopian languages.

References

[1].   Ball, M. (2005). <u>Clinical Sociolinguistics</u>. USA: Blackwell Publishing.

[2].   Coulmas, F. (1998). <u>The Handbook of Sociolinguistics</u>. Tokyo: Blackwell Publishing.

[3].   Deuchar, M. (1987). <u>Feminism and Linguistic Theory.</u> Vol-7, Pp.77-99. Pergamon Journals Ltd.

[4].   Hellinger, M and Bubmann, H. (1984). <u>Gender Across Languages</u>. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

[5].   Hobbs, P. (2003). <u>The Medium Is the Message: Politeness Strategies in Men's and Women'sVoice Mail Messages</u>. Journal of Pragmatics.Vol-35, Pp. 243-262.

ALGANESH MULUGETA, Prof. C.R.S. SARMA

[6].   Holmes, J. (1992). Chapter 7: Gender and Age. An Introduction to Sociolinguistics,3rd ed. (pp.157-165). University of New England: Diana Eades

[7].   Holmes, J and Meyerhoff, M. (2003). The Handbook of Language and Gender. USA: Blackwell   Publishing.

[8].   Holmes, J and Marra, M. (2010). Femininity, Feminism and Gendered Discourse. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

[9].   Lakoff, R. (1975). Language and Woman's Place. New York: Harper and Row

[10].   Martin, M. (1995). Introduction to Language and Society. London and New York: Taylor and Francis Routledge.

[11].   Meyerhoff, M. (2006). Introducing Sociolinguistics. London and New York: Routledge.

[12].   Okamoto, S. (2004). Japanese Language, Gender and Ideology: Cultural Models and RealPeople. NewYork: Oxford University Press.

[13].   Prewitt, et al. (2011). The Gendering of Language: A Comparison of Gender Equality inCountries with Gendered, Natural Gender and Genderless Languages. Springer Science

[14].   Smith, D, (1987. The Everyday World as Problematic. Boston: Northeastern University Press

[15].   Discover society.org/2013//11/05/Whats-in-a-name-gendered-naming-practices-and-identity-in-britain. Accessed on 5/11/2013