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The Interplay of Language and Gender in Dominant Discourses: Examining the Masculine Bias in Language

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Abstract

Numerous studies have critiquedthe stereotypical and essentialist assumptions inculcated by cultural artefacts and texts through the lens of feminism, poststructuralism, sociology, and linguistics. Notwithstanding the attempts to establish gender equality and inclusivity in contemporary times,the present study examineshow language spreads and supports masculine biasesthroughvarious dominant and popular discourses of society.The study considers the omnipresence of language in society and observes that language tends to legitimise the behaviour and preferences ofmen as dominant while objectifying ortrivialisingthose of women.Taking a cue from Robin Lakoff's deficit and dominant approaches, the paper chooses instances and examples fromvarious discourses to studyhow languagenourishes patriarchal attitudesandnaturalises the domination of men over women. Though Lakoff's perspectives came four decades ago, an overview of the present scenario reveals the contemporaneity of her observations in studying the masculine bias in language.

Keywords: language, gender, bias, discourse, power,language socialization

Introduction

Culture isunderstood as the embodiment of lived experiencessurrounding ideologies established through the medium of communication called language. Studies on the relationship between culture and language corroboratethat language reflects theinequalities and biases inherent in culture through racism, language preferences, religion, ageism, gender stereotypes, etc. (Ng, 2007). Language purveyssuch biasesthrough feminine markers, generic masculine titles, and trite adjectives and adverbs that give prominence to a gender. These gender stereotypes in language occur through their repeated useindaily interactions, which over a period of time, get internalized among individuals. Thus, gender biases in language need to be addressed aspolemical, for they get routinizedthrough the ubiquitous nature of language.

Language is both ontological as it situates our existence and epistemological as it answers questions such as,"who,""what," and "why." It is a representative system that codifies and modifies behavior. Major theoretical approaches within feminism and gender studies vouch for the plasticity of gender,which is cemented through repeated actions and gender roles that are malleable (Mooney & Evans, 2019; Coates, 2012), whereas sex and sexuality are biological (Pinker, 2003).In the present study, gender is defined in terms of what one does or performs, keeping in mind the fluidity ofgender identities.

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Considering gender and sex as similarengenders stereotypesthat compartmentalize roles for people based on their sex. Based on physical appearances, men and women are treated as separate groups with features distinct from the other group. These features decide and dictate the ideal behavior, language,and actionto which individuals belonging to the groups have to conform.Moreover, these notionsreceive circulation through dominant discourses such as religion andliteraturethat also describe gender in binaries.Language is the portal through which these discourses reach individuals.Thus, discriminatory practices prevalent in these discourses circulate through dailyinteractions, leading to language socialization.

Gender in language has been discussed based on deficitand dominance approaches (Lakoff&Bucholtz, 2004), decades after Otto Jespersen's remark that women's speech is incomplete, has less vulgarity when compared to that of men (Jespersen, 2013), and tends to surpass grammatical rules as they "jump from topic to topic" (Mooney, 2019, p.102). Subsequent studies have emerged as an extension (Carli, 1990; Mulac etal., 2001; Reid etal., 2003) or a critique of these studies (Fishman, 1980; Cameron, 1992), with an additional focus on sexism in language wherein language invalidates, depreciates, or restricts womanhood or women's role (Henley, 1987).

The present study readsdominant discoursessuch as religion andliteraturethrough Lakoff's deficit and dominant approaches to identify how these discoursesuse language to mediate gender roles in daily life. Here, the term "discourse" is taken as "a long and serious treatment or discussion of a subject in speech or writing" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, n.d.).Even though novel theories and attempts against gender essentialism have emerged after Lakoff, thisstudyseeks toestablish thecontemporary relevanceof her approachesto gender and language and identifies how essentialism still operates insidiously through interactions.

Historical Perspectives on Language and Gender

Languageexerts a formative power through a set of symbols called words through which people express their ideas and aspirations. Language is at once observable from the outside through speaking and writing; however, it is also private through one's mental chatter and thoughts. Natural language is the medium in which thoughts are coded; in fact, it is the medium in which one thinks (Fodor, 1975). The nature of the relationship between language and thought was theoretically understood by Sapir and Whorf through the linguistic relativity hypothesis (Bohn, 2000). The formative power of language allows itsspeakers to think and perceive the world in a way peculiar to their language. Though Whorf's theory is assumed to be flawed, it cannot be rejected that language shapes ideologies (Lund, 2014), as language influences how one thinks of oneself and their environment (Brann, 2006).The resultant language socialization decidesindividuals' perceptions asthey get familiarized with society through dominant discourses, which are invariably formed through language.

The inference that we see the world through a skewed, masculine lens initially emerged in the 1970s through Robin Tolmach Lakoff's _Language and Woman's Place_ (1975) in which she substantiates women's language as distinguishable from that of men. It is exemplified that women tend to be more polite while speaking, use tag questions more often than men, and hesitate while expressing opinions, peppering their speech with phrases such as, "I think…,""It seems to be…," (Lakoff& Bucholtz, 2004, p. 49) etc. Furthermore, women who speak to be heard are branded asaudacious,and men who hesitate to express their opinions are bullied as timid.Lakoff holds the view thatthese differences are contrived to define women's use of language as deficient and lacking seriousness.

Thedifference approach to language further acknowledges that there are distinctions between conversations that men and women have, based on their emotional and social needs (Maltz &Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1991). However, thevery concept of "women's language" is discriminatory,due to the bifurcation of language as belonging to a specific gender. Even whenpeople's use of language is not isomorphic,the phenomenon of such variations turns problematic when differences become deficient for women and rationale to warrant power to men. Similarly, the representation of women in language colored by essentialist assumptions also reveals language as male-oriented. Pronouns such as "he,""him," and "his" are commonly used in public documents as epicene terms. For instance, the Constitution of India has sentences wherein nouns such as,"he" and "him"represent every citizen of the country:

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1. No person shall be deprived of *his* [emphasis added] life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law(Indian Const. art. XXI, § 3)

2. No person who is not a citizen of India shall, while*he*[emphasis added] holds any office of profit or trust under the State, accept without the consent of the President any title from any foreign State (Indian Const. art. XVIII, § 3)

However, such referents that exclude women are more evocative of men (Moulton et al., 1978) and reminiscent of the lower status of women (Lakoff& Bucholtz, 2004).

Most of the previous studieson the relationship between gender and language are informed by thetheoretical strands of feminist linguistics (Mills & Mullany, 2011), feminist deconstruction (Williams, 2018; Zaidi, & Sahibzada, 2020), and poststructuralism (Kubota, 2003; Baxter, 2018). Feminist-oriented discussions challenge the masculine preoccupation of language and demand changes in the use of generic masculine pronouns. The turn towards dissecting language from the political stance of feminism was a reaction to the assumption that generic masculine nouns encompass other genders also. A critical approach to language and gender makes users of a language conscious ofits normalized biases and makeslanguage more gender-inclusive. Additionally, social psychologists study the stereotypes inherent in language by implying that certain words have a stable meaning, like "girl," which is less positive than "women," as girls are considered childish when compared to women (Weatherall, 2005).

Incomplete Women and Competent Men

Lakoff's approach identifies differences in the use of language by men and women tospecify how differences become deficiency and the means to dominate women. Her views take after the observations made by Jespersen, though Lakoff justifies them through her intuition and personal observations (Thomas, 2013). In discerning these differences, she alsoaccepts men's use of language as dominant and that of women as inferior (Spender, 1985), thereby appearing to sanction male domains of language and trivialize female patterns (Johnson, 1983). However, she exhorts women to notice how language generates subordinate positions for them byignoring women's speech as part of serious conversations.Women are interrupted and expected to be listeners more than speakers in cross-sex conversations (Vasanta, 2001).However,there are no natural male domains of language as they arecolonized by men.

It was thought that the entry of the internet as a major medium of communication would revolutionize women's use of language.This would perforate Lakoff's argument that women usefewer expletives (Lakoff& Bucholtz, 2004) and their languagereflects their powerlessness mediated by masculine hegemony and monopoly of language (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005). Indeed, women's use of language has begun to be less restrictive over the internet and more active than before (Herring, 1993, 2000, 2003; Herring & Paolillo, 2006). Nevertheless, attempts to mark the virtual world as male-oriented continue sincewomen endure derogatory comments on social media. In India, women who upload posts ontheir sexual experiences and preferences or express their opinions on sex and incidents of a political nature are bullied in the name of Indian culture that does not tolerate feminine aggression but values meekness and silence. Siddiqi (2021) identifies how gender-trolling through threats and unsolicited sexual advances intends to ostracize women from the virtual world, thereby attempting to turn offline spaces patriarchal. Additionally, the suggestion to involve women as creators of meaning through their independent use of language across the web (Spender, 2019) receives challenges and revives Lakoff's idea of male dominance in language. Thus, Lakoff's statements can be read as ways to understand howthe hegemonic appropriation of language by the dominant discourses of culture has become male-dominated and reluctant to afford visibility and validity for women.

A master narrative like religion is historically interpreted as an oppressive institute that exists as binaries (right/wrong, good/bad, reward/punishment, God/Devil), which further call into question the idea of superiority. Every religion, in accepting God as the creator of the universe, has also succeeded in weaving hierarchies for God's creationsthrough scriptures. In the opening verses of the Bible, it is quoted,

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And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth'… (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Genesis.1:25).

It is further recorded that God granted man the privilege to name everything on earth (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001), thus making him wield the ultimate power to dictate categories for society (Eckert& Ginet, 2013). The Bible which is globally read demonstrates language as the monopoly of man.

The use of sexist language in the Bible was identified as oppressive and domineering in the nineteenth century by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for whom the use of masculine pronouns as gender-neutral was misleading (Stanton, 1993). Lucretia Mott also saw the Bible as open to pluralistic interpretations and critiqued inequalities on sexes as "perverted application of the text" (Mott, 1849, para. 7). In 1989, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) was introduced in Britain, according to which the opening verses read as,"Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea…" (*New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*, 2021, Genesis. 1:25). Even so, God's gender is determined as male to retain its original meaning (Romaine, 2001). Simultaneously, the singer Ariana Grande portrays God as a woman in her song *God is a Woman* (2018). However, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, rules out the possibility of God having any gender, though the Bible still considers God as male (Not in His name: archbishop of Canterbury, 2018).

In Hindu culture, hierarchieslargely emerge from *Manusmriti.* Women appear oppressed and sidelined as theymustbe kept in "perpetual subordination" (Bonner, 1990, p. 60) and must"…be protected and guarded in her childhood by her father, in her youth by her husband, and in her old age by her sons" (Kelkar, 1995, p. 41). *Manusmriti*holds contradicting views on women as she is respected as a mother but treated as a slave when she is a wife (Kelkar, 1995). The laws of Manu describe women as lazy,treacherous, and incapable of love (Kelkar, 1995), who should worship their husbands. However, retellings and revisions of primary scriptures reveal the formation offixed concepts. In Genesis, Eve is the first woman and all human beings are her offspring. Due to her folly in trusting a disguised Satan, women, in general,became less trustworthy. It is this act of disobedience that legitimizes her inferiority and the violence that men can unleash to discipline her (Ess, 1995).

Interestingly, among the pantheon of Hindu deities, the goddess Saraswati is the muse of learning, whose blessings are invoked for success in art and scholarship. Equally positive and motherly is the image of goddess Annapoorna- the giver of food and life. In India, there even exists a temple dedicated to the Goddess of English, situating the entire language on a "feminized terrain" (Ramaswamy, 2011, p. 207) and according tothe language with motherly qualities.The veneration of women as goddessesis less of an ideal descriptionthan a patriarchal intention to erase female experiences and deny them agency (Prakash, 2019). Earth and nature are served the epithet "mother" to imply nurturing capacities. The attributes of a mother, such as loving, feeding, and reprimanding, are values that both feminist and masculine discourses compare and equalize for nature and women (Klein, 1989).

Even when the earth is seen as a woman, men are variously interpreted as her dependents and protectors. In the patriarchal idea of nationalism, one's nation is one's motherland- the place where one is nurtured, akin to a womb.The nation as womanis installed on a pedestal to be worshipped and protected. When men are called to perform military duty, women are expected to engage in"uterine nationalism"(Heng & Devan, 1997), whereby they reproduce and become the living surrogates of their motherland (Ramaswamy, 1998).This dual indexicality of languageseeks distinct performances from women and men, therebysexualizing subjects (Kulick, 2005).Defining and describing the nation as female somatic sexualize nationalism, assign roles,andconfer essentialist attributesuponboth women and men.

Replicating and Routinising Gender Stereotypes

It is further observed that the differences in language emerge only after a particular age in men and women, as it is the mother's or woman's language that becomes the first language (Lakoff& Bucholtz, 2004). There is a significant difference between the speech of adolescent girls and boys,especially in the use of non-standard forms, dysphemism, and double negatives, as evidenced by a study in Australia (Eisikovitz, 2011).These are

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social and linguistic norms which they internalize through the behaviour of adults. A boy describes that he was disciplined while using swear wordsin childhood, but as a teenager, "If I swear in front of me mother now she don't saynothing" (Eisikovitz, 2011, p. 47).When non-standard forms are associated with masculinity (Coates, 2012), femininity is approved whengirlscontinue to use standard forms of language as they enter adolescence.Men also find women's use of harshwords deplorable and unacceptable. In 2023, the Indian politician Mahua Moitra faced heavy criticism for the use of strong and emphatic language in the Parliament- an act whichis condemned as offensive and unparliamentary forwomen but normal in a man's speech (The Swaddle, 2023; Hindustan Times, 2023).Studies around how men and women use language reveal thatfeatures which seem to distinguish men's speech from that of women overlap (O'Barr & Atkins, 2005). Thus,differences in gender and sex cannot give indisputable conclusions on the differences in the use of language due to the fluidity of gender identities.

These differences in the use of language are not predetermined but are patriarchally mediated. It is alsoobserved thatgrammatical representations of objects in a language influence how speakers of the language mentally perceive them (Boroditsky et al., 2003). The study records how German and Spanish speakers, both languages having grammatical gender, rated masculine nouns as more "potent" than feminine nouns, though the nouns referred to inanimate objects sans biological gender. The study proves that grammatical gender discriminates and represses women (Irigaray, 1993).A similar study was conducted among speakers of English, a language without gendered grammar, to find how they perceive nouns in English after learning a language with gendered grammar. It was found that the speakers of English have speculated the gender of objects (Boroditsky et al., 2003).The study proves that speakers of a language without a gendered grammatical system can also assume gender for nouns, thus influencing their use of language.

Even without gendered grammar, English language preserves and perpetuates gender stereotypes which become biases. Gender differences are informed through definitional (semantic) and stereotypical (role nouns) information (Corbett, 1991). By definitional information, a spinster is an unmarried old woman and a bachelor is an unmarried man whose age does not matter. An engineer, an architect, or a pilot are often perceived as men due to stereotypical information. The famous surgeon riddle exemplarily shows that medical professions like those of a doctor or a surgeon are perceived as belonging to men, and the thought of women in such roles rarely passes one's mind (Belle et al., 2021).

Derogatory concepts of gender expressed in language turn problematic when they are normalized as essential to one gender. For instance, the Korean word "doenjang nyeo" refers to those women who are reluctant to spend money on necessary items, but overspend on luxury goods (Galer, 2021). The term became so popular through the song "Gangnam Style"that the Korean word was calqued in English as "soybean paste girl." A similar term has not yet been found for boys or men.

Recently, social media platforms circulated an image of the doors of loos for men and women. At the center of the door of men's loo, it was written "BLA," while the door of women's loo was covered with the words "BLA BLA…,"(Starecat, n.d.) to signify women as more talkative and verbally louder than men.The difference in how men and women communicate occurs due to the communication strategies they employ, collectively called "genderlects" (Tannen, 1991). Women seek to establish intimacy and rapport with their interlocutors, while men seek status and expertise through communication. This does not mean that women can never hold factual conversations or that men always conceal their emotions during verbal communication.

Gender discrimination happens predominantly due to mixing gender with sexuality and misconstruing both as fixed. Children's textbooks are typical exampleswhereinthe picture of a woman cooking in her kitchen and men working aspolice officers, pilots, drivers, mechanics, musicians, etc. create stereotypical perceptions.The nexus of essentialist notions continues without interruptions in the absence ofcorrective lessons, resulting inideologies and routinized discrimination.

Women as Typifying the Archetypal Men

The science of discrimination rests on power relations that see relationships among gender, race, class, religion, etc. through binaries. Power is an omnipresent phenomenon (Driver, 1985), and power relations manifest

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through gender relations (Osmond and Thorne, 1993) expressedindominant and popular discourses.Through the repeated use of words and their denotative and connotative meaningsthat promote stereotypes, power can operate through gender discrimination.

It is furtherrecognized that uneven power relations indexed in language become standard enactments which prove harmful for men when they are expected to be strong, restrained in terms of emotions, and have a preference for sports and adventures. When girls feel less confident in expressing themselves or enunciating their needs and aspirations,boys might grow up with the pressure of fending for their families and choosing professions that society deems suitable for men. Men who cry and show their emotions or wear ornaments are considered less of a man and "effeminate"- another derogatory term that not only discriminates men and women based on physical or mental attributes but also seems to mention that being a woman is less worthy.

Similarly,the choice of generic-masculine nouns and pronounsrests more on the power equations in the socio-cultural milieu than linguistic superiority (Spender, 1985; see also Ng, 2007). The semantic features that culture accords to language through repeated usage of words appear normalas the circulation of patriarchal values through language becomes hard to eradicate. For instance,a society's perception of gender can be found in proverbs (Dzahene-Quarshie&Omari, 2021).In the proverb"Man proposes, God disposes," the term "man" stands for human beings. However, the iteration of the noun "man"excludes women and establishes the dominance of the male gender.Correspondingly, sayings like, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach,""A man is as old as he feels, a woman as old as she looks,""One tongue is enough for a woman," etc. see women as less than men. Thus, language not only perpetuates gender differences but also "reproduces an asymmetrical gender system" (Lakoff &Bucholtz, 121). Such popular sayings and proverbs that are transmitted across generationsoften go unchallenged and carry immense potential to promotegender biases.

The symbiotic relationship a language has with culture makesit intertextual asits signifiers reflect the nature ofculture.Thus, the ideology of a culture is encoded in language through which its beliefs, attitudes, and notions of morality come to be fixed (Klemens, 2007).English language is often identified as patriarchal (Hellinger, 1980; Niner et.al., 2013; Austin & Hsieh, 2021; Yu, 2021) not only due to its favoring of masculine nouns as genericbut also because of its canonical literaturewhichseldomaffords a woman's name. Literature is a dominant discourse through which language receives popularity and circulation.

In all the canonical and widely read works of literature, ideas on women's lives, habits, and traits reach the audience only after they are filtered through the male writer's imagination. Thus, perceptions regarding women became a product of the male gaze. Women lacked authority and they were authorized by men. It is only since the end of the eighteenth century that women authors' names began to be included in literary canons.Novels or any kind of fiction written by women were critiqued as mawkish.They lackedthe lived experiences thatcould bring gravity to the plot, which male writers had the privilege to have. For instance, Joseph Conrad's novels have a charm owing to the maritime experiences he hadbeing a sailor (Woolf, n.d.). Women of those times were denied similar exposures and their explorations were limited to social gatheringscentered around families and recipes. Thus, when Jane Austen emerged as a major writer during the Romantic Age in England, her works were classified as domestic novels that discussed marriages and families.

Lakoff's identification of difference is applicable in understanding how women writers' language was critiqued. Mary Ann Evans, who chose the male pseudonym George Eliot to be accepted as a serious writer,critiqued the language of other women writers as "the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic" (Eliot, 2010, para 1), considering it a scourge on the education these women novelists received. Eliot exercised her agency to analyze her contemporary women writers and never critiqued how male writers represented romance, life, and the women of their times.Victorian women writersexcluded from canonicity alsocreated female characters who werestrong spinsters and heroes (Poster, 1996).Contrary to Eliot's blanket description, theydid write sensation novels with women charactersbattered by faterather than being lost in romance and daydreams.

Although contemporary arenas of literature see women changing the dominated aesthetic (Eagleton, 2005) through female authorshipand characters, realms of recent fiction and non-fiction establish a new zeitgeist where femininity and experiences of women are complex.Fictions such as *Twilight* (2005-2008), *Vampire Diaries* (1991-2014), and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) echo patriarchal ideations of women, thus clouding any likelihood

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of envisaging emancipation for women (Luksza, 2015).Though feminist studies consider modernity as regurgitating women's oppression through films and advertisements,contemporary fiction exemplified through *Ladies Coupe*(2001), *Purple Hibiscus*(2003),and *Fasting, Feasting*(1999) revealswomen'smodernity as gendered and an extension of traditional conceptualization of femininity (Daya, 2010).

Responses toDominant Discourses

Theorists who critique language for harbouringthe interests of masculine gender advocate gender neutralization and the use of epicene, gender-inclusive pronouns (Alvanoudi, 2006; Motschenbacher, 2012).There have been attempts to include neopronouns in English language like "ze," which can be used instead of the masculine generic "he." Unlike the frequent neologisms in English, grammatical categories are less prone to new additions of functional words, thus making their circulation less popular (Mooney & Evans, 2019). Furthermore, the use of generic pronouns can itself be hierarchical in the order of words, such as ladies and gentlemen, and man and wife (Mooney & Evans, 2019). In languages with gendered grammatical systems, applying gender-neutral language is even more difficult (Hord, 2016).

This difficulty arises as social and cultural practices followed over the centuries have collected and coagulated inequalities. Even ifgender neutrality could be achieved in the portrayal of nouns in textbooks, such perceptions could not be completely uprooted, as they emerge from cultural biases. Male bias cannot be reduced solely throughnon-gendered language or gender-neutral language because of the profundity that cultural stereotypes have (Galer, 2021).Thus, language assimilates discrimination by being the witness and conveyor of such practices.

Proving language guilty of spreading biased thoughts,followed by a demand to modify languagecannot bring about social changes (Schulz, 1975; Lakoff& Bucholtz, 2004). Since semantic and syntactic changes cannot temper the degree of discriminationinmale-oriented discourses,alternate discourses reveal the fluidity of gender. Men who celebrate their expressivity and women who disregard the standards set by popular discourses problematize normative discourses and create alternate discourses. They challenge hegemonic masculinity and ideal femininity through their performances that often go censured. The leadership style followed by Indira Gandhi,Margaret Thatcher, and Jayalalithaa have invited admiration besides criticism.Such discourses re-establish both language and gender as dynamic –language as a system of meanings that fluctuate and gender as being actively produced through daily interactions. Coates provides a comparison of quotidian instances involving conversations. One instance shows conformity to the dominant ideology that every daughter has an affectionate relationship with her mother (Coates, 2012).The other scenariopuncturesessentialist and static notions ofthe mother-daughter relationship, thus showing the rise of an alternate discourse:

[talking about the function of funerals]

MEG: I would see it [mother's funeral] as honoring her memory in some way

[Sue is complaining that she phones her mother but her mother never phones her]

SUE: I'm not very close to mother really/

LIZ: cos most mothers are a pain in the bum

(Coates, 2012, p. 96)

These discourses provide alternate views on those "grand narratives" (Lyotard), which, in the interplay between language and culture legitimize male perspectives. In alternate discourses, language exhibits its pliability and the multiple ways in which one's gender gets represented through an incessant "play between one's psyche and appearance" (Butler, 2011, p. 234).

Conclusion

Gender discrimination has been a burning topic for the past two centuries, which gained premium through waves of feminism that argue for equality,and poststructuralism which approves plurality of meaning instead of resonating with the grand narratives. Studying language about gender demonstrateslanguage socialization since gender as a cultural construct has implications on how language is used. The paper revisitedLakoff's deficit and

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dominant approaches tounderstandwhether the cardinal arguments of these perspectivescarry contemporary relevancein studying language and gender through the dominant discourses that pervade one's quotidian existence.

The various instances that the paper discussed show the contemporary validity of Lakoff's arguments on language as the conveyor of gender stereotypes.These approaches show how men's interactions and performances have become the touchstone to consign validity or exclusion to women. The differences that ought to exist among every individual are undermined in favour of stereotypes that see men and women as belonging to dual categories withnatural, immutable characteristics.Women are thought to possessthe evidence of absence,owing to their use of language in conversations, which in turn becomes ways to dominate them through language.

These approaches to language and gender also study daily interactions as having a locus of control that dictates how women and men ought to speak. It views gender in binaries without any recourse for deviation.Culture establishes a traditionalideation of gender through roles and performance of those roles. The resultant cisnormativity is due to the stereotypes that are cemented and circulated by male-oriented language in dominant discourses. Individuals encounter stereotypical, essentialist assumptions, and consume unbalanced, hierarchical power relations through the dominant narratives of religion and aesthetics such as literature.As seen through the examples, gender stereotypes become a double-edged sword that also problematizes men's experiences and aspirations.

Even when culture, gender, and language are interrelated, bringing changes in language through epicene pronouns is hard to achieve due to the biases that are entrenched in a culture. However, alternate discourses move against the tide of dominant-dominated power relations and offer visibility to new ways of being and performing, which disrupt the conception of stable gender identities and ensure the dynamic nature of language and gender.Such revisions and alternate discourses enable women and men to own their lives (Boynton, 1996) and be their authentic selves instead of conforming to the established standards of gender.

Stereotypical notions remain cemented by iterations that occur not only through interactions but also through systems, beliefs, and practices in society. Similarly, the perception that women and men should behave and express themselves in a specific way would dissolve if alternate discourses could also receive iterative value in language through socio-cultural systems and popular media. The ubiquitous nature of language can make it the conveyor of inclusive ideas as well. For instance, revisionist tales surrounding women characters such as Sita and Draupadi expose the mythopoeic nature of the long-standing narratives that either victimize women or celebrate their sacrifices. Women can be ideal or flawed mothers and daughters, cunning or capricious villains and witches, just as men can be sentimental.Since discriminations are conceptually encoded in language which later influences practice, alternate discourses counter the effect of such stereotypical and biased constructs.

The observations made in this study pertain to how language effects gender discrimination. The study attempted to highlight the discriminatory practices in language which is naively used and normalized in everyday situations and popular narratives. It is further acknowledged that the experiences of the LGBTQ community in terms of language are not discussed in the paper. Future research studies can expand the ideas to be inclusive of the discrimination they face through language and dominant discourses.

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