

Gender Portrayal in Sexual Euphemisms used in Programme Connect of K24 Television of Kenya

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Abstract: Gender is a serious issue and well pronounced in the African community. The issue of man being taken as strong, authoritative and powerful is normal in our society and it will be astonishing if the man is portrayed otherwise. This is as a result of our society being patriarchal. Woman is portrayed as weak, powerless being who cannot accomplish anything without relying on man. Though many researchers have researched on gender among different tribes and areas, the issue of gender portrayal in sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24 has not been researched. It is from this gap that, this paper discusses the gender portrayal in sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24. This paper deals with analyzing fifteen sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24 television and show how they portray gender. The question that this paper asks and tries to answer is: Do sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24 portray gender bias? Research data was collected from five episodes of programme *Connect* of K24. It was also collected from the interview between the presenter and the researchers. Research used observation, interview, recording in sound recorders and CDs method to collect data. The qualitative method of data analysis was used by the researcher. This paper establishes that there are sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24 and they portray gender disparity in that a man is portrayed positively while woman, negatively. This paper is important because it would help in the linguistic field especially in semantics and pragmatics. It will also help scholars in gender issues and researchers who use Critical Discourse Analysis theory (CDA).

Keywords: Gender portrayal, sexual euphemisms, programme *Connect*, K24 television, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is an important issue in the society. Gender is a state of being a male or female. The society is made up of two sexes i.e. male and female. In the patriarchal society, man is taken to be more important while woman takes a lower position. In the matriarchal society woman is considered better than man.

Many scholars have researched on gender issue for instance Greer [1] sees patriarchy as deeply entrenched in culture and society and it is very difficult to eradicate it. She identifies the continued existence of patriarchy in a number of areas: One, in sexuality it is men who have gained sexual freedom rather than women. There is an increasing expectation that women will service males sexual fantasies. The more subtle and varied ways in which women gain sexual pleasure are neglected. Two, women are still expected to be obsessively concerned with their bodies and physical appearance. Far from being free to dress and appear as they choose, women are subject to rigid restrictions. They are not allowed to be themselves. Three, women are still afraid of men. The interests of the dominant

male are maintained by those who teach women to be afraid of violent males, of rapists and of flashers. She continues to say that girls are feminized from childhood by being taught rules that subjugate them, she argues, later that when women embrace the stereotypical version of adult femininity, they develop a sense of shame about their own bodies, and lose their natural and political autonomy. The result is powerlessness, isolation, a diminished sexuality and lack of joy. She argues that women should get to know and come to accept their own bodies, taste their own menstrual blood and give up celibacy and monogamy.

Connell [2] says that gender is a manner in which social practices are organized. These practices relate to the processes of reproduction and human bodily structures. The practice of gender is not limited to isolated actions but to branch arrays referred to as collection of gender practices by Connell. Connell describes how institutions are gendered not only as a metaphor but also in an active manner. The state, for example, is gendered since state organizational practices are constructed in relation to the field of

reproduction – the fact that it is still mostly men who hold key position of power in the state is not only the reason for the state’s masculinity, but also its outcome in masculine preference. He argues that masculinity includes different systems and this inevitably leads to internal contradictions and historical changes. In order to acknowledge gender as a social pattern it must be viewed as a historical product as well as a producer of history.

David [3] in his research shows how women are portrayed in Gusii language using the proverbs. He says that men are portrayed as powerful compared to women who are portrayed powerless. He says that the Gusii proverbs undermine women and respect men and this justifies the low position of a woman in the society.

Riro [4] in his research on the portrayal of man in the Abakuria circumcision songs, shows that societies expectations, looks and direction take a big part in organizing responsibilities in gender and evaluate gender value. He establishes that the Abakuria community portrays men in a positive manner different from women who are portrayed negatively. Abakuria male circumcision songs show the power is vested in men in different fields in the society. For example, in laws, politics, leadership, economy and authority in decision making and reconciliation in the society.

Wiik [5] describes the professional identity of journalists as assuming democratic shape of the present and immediate political environment. He argues that men have an advantage over women in the way they are perceived by the general public. He says that being male is unquestionably an advantage in most situations, while female gender on the other hand may be regarded as negative Capita – a debt, because it forces the capital holder to work extra hard to make up for it (pg 174).

Abudi [6] shows the way women are undermined through language, putting into considerations on the use of metaphors and wise sayings in Dholuo language. He says that these metaphors and wise sayings portray women in a negative way while men are portrayed positively.

Onyango [7] says that the majority of Kenyan women who mainly live in rural areas have not had enough education to enable them escape from negative masculine sexual load. He says, for instance that in a number of communities, the woman is expected to do a lot to please a man sexually. The argument is that if she does not do so, she will give her man a blank cheque to look for other women. In the realm, the process involves keeping her bed, the citadel of sex, neat all the time. He continues to say that, among some communities of western Kenya that have been influenced by Baganda culture, she is supposed to be sexually seductive to her husband. There is still a belief

in Kenya that the Baganda women are very artistic in matters of sex. She is even supposed to be a sexual trigger to her husband and sometimes pretend that she is getting hurt just to make the husband reach a climax in love making. She is supposed to chant some praises in honour of the performing husband. And more importantly her usefulness in sex is supposed to be her artistry in love making lest she gets the overall grading of ‘yule ni bure’ (that one is not very good in bed) from the husband.

Nelson in Ndambuki [8] says that women are compared to unavoidable responsibilities like menstruation, pregnancy while men are compared to responsibilities that require bodily strength. In English women, are portrayed as passive while men are active. English also portrays a woman as somebody edible and a plant-like, sweet and deflowering.

Euphemism is an indirect word or phrase that people use to refer to something embarrassing or unpleasant; sometimes to make it seem more acceptable than it really is, euphemisms are a result of tabooed words in the society.

Locher [9] says that speakers attempt to avoid making situations embarrassing or making the addressee feel uncomfortable by using euphemisms. He says that politeness strategies are used to save the hearer’s face. Moreover, speakers are also concerned about their own face more than the addressee’s face due to the fact that the speakers do not wish to damage their own face. Consequently, by employing euphemisms, the threats to both the speakers and hearers face will be minimized.

Thomas [10] says indirectness is a linguistics strategy that people employ to avoid a taboo subject such as sex. It is intended to bring about politeness in the interaction. Brown and Levinson [11] say politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearer’s face that is avoid embarrassing the other person or making them feel uncomfortable. Face threatening Acts (FTAs) are acts that infringe on the hearer’s need to maintain his or her self esteem and be respected. Politeness strategies are therefore developed to deal with face threatening acts. The goal of politeness is to make all the parties relaxed and comfortable with one another. They hold that politeness has a socially basic role. It controls potential conflicts among the communicators. Politeness in utterance is evaluated according to the set rules of traditions and differ from one culture to another, that is which actions threatens ‘face’ or which politeness strategy is taken in what context will differ across cultures.

Zhenqiang [12] says that euphemisms are indirect expression which are usually used as substitutes for blunt precision. Almost all cultures have certain

notions or things that people avoid mentioning directly even when there is such terms in language.

Sanderson [13] says that euphemisms show a relationship between a tabooed language and euphemistic language – the origin of euphemisms is tabooed word. Tabooed words are embarrassing when they used in communication.

Douglas [14] argues that in many speech communities, unacceptable language of which dysphemisms are part, are only uttered under restricted circumstances ; a speaker who utters them outside the restrictions is ashamed and punished.

William [15] notes that acceptable language is profoundly influenced by culture. The culture of a people has an effect on people's way of avoiding unacceptable language.

This article tries to explain how sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24 television justifies the truth about patriarchal. Programme *Connect* uses sexual euphemisms to communicate with viewers to avoid embarrassment. This article selected or picked some of sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* and discussed how they portray gender.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The author identified and described the male and female sex related euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24 television of Kenya and showed how they portrayed gender bias in their use. The author used descriptive design of research to achieve the objective of the study. The data was collected from the five episodes of programme *Connect* of K24 and from the scheduled interview between the author and presenter. The author used purposive random technique of sampling the data, where fifteen sexual euphemisms (two males and thirteen females) were collected and used. The data was recorded on a tape recorder and CD and later transcribed in a paper. The findings of this study indicate that sexual euphemisms used in programme *Connect* of K24 portray gender biasness in that they portray men positively and women negatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Male Related Euphemisms

Male related sexual euphemisms that are used in the programme *Connect* of K24 television are mainly two Mr. Victor and safari fupi. These euphemisms are used in a way that they portray men positively though they are weak.

Mr. Victor is what men carry between their legs, you know we are trying to be nice and do not want to offend anybody.

Mr. Victor is the private part of a man (Penis). Mr. Victor is a winner and whereby there is a winner there must be competition and a loser, which means sex is a battle or competition between a man and a woman and if a man is a winner automatically the woman is a loser. For the presenter to give the private part of a man's body the name Mr. Victor is the evidence of power accorded to men in the society and their status. Man is portrayed as strong and must emerge the winner all the time. For the man to be a victor he is supposed to use his Mr. Victor to beat a woman, so his Mr. Victor is a sign of victory, the hardness, control, size and strength of Mr. Victor during erection is an armour a man is supposed to use to show his strength against a woman, so Mr. Victor is a sign of how a man is taken in the society, in that he is strong and powerful and must emerge a winner in everything he undertakes. This is a clear indication that on the other hand the women is weak and powerless before a man. This justifies the undermining and oppression of women by a male dominated society, where a woman has no voice.

I have been getting lots of SMS and calls of many people complaining of Safari Fupi, i.e premature ejaculations or people taking long.

The second male related sexual euphemism Safari Fupi (Premature Ejaculation). This is a state of a man pouring sperm before the right time. i.e. pouring sperms prematurely. It is obvious that pouring sperms prematurely is a sign of weakness but according to the African customs and traditions man cannot be despised, this is the reason why the presenter looks for a term that cannot portray a man as weak. For her to use Safari Fupi to represent this weakness establishes that the presenter did not want to undermine man and this is according to how it is in the society. The issue of the presenter looking for a polite term to present this weakness is an evidence of strength and power a man is accorded in traditional African Society.

Premature ejaculation is a serious issue that can lead to divorce, if it occurs regularly. The African belief that man is superior and cannot be portrayed inferior forced the present to look for a term that portrays him positive irrespective of his weakness. This is a clear evidence of power and important position a man holds in the society and cannot be portrayed otherwise even if the situation dictates so.

Female Related Euphemisms

Sexual euphemisms related to female show how a woman is weak and undermined in the society. The presenter used euphemisms that justify openly the low position of women and their responsibilities as an entertainment object to men.

Today we decide to take a personal car to Mombasa Raha, we are taking a Mercedes Benz. For you to use a Mercedes Benz to go to Mombasa Raha you do not just jump into the

car and drive off and if you do hautafika mahali nakuambia utaisha njiani (you will not get anywhere I tell you, you will be finished on the way), labda hata (may be even) Athi River you may be lucky if you fika (Reach) Athi River may be Mlolongo.

Mercedes Benz is a woman's body. A woman body is compared to a luxurious car called Mercedes Benz. Mercedes Benz is a very important, luxurious and a strong vehicle. Anyone who owns a Mercedes Benz is considered important and highly respected. The presenter used this term to show the value of a woman's body as an important part in sex. Comparing a woman body to a car though luxurious one is undermining her. We understand that the vehicle is only important when it is used during travelling, after a journey the vehicle is parked until another need of travel arises. Taking a woman as a vehicle is a mistake, because she is taken as a means to achieve man's objectives, this is undermining her because it shows she is important only during sexual intercourse but after, she is useless until another need of sex arises later. This shows that a woman is taken as an object to be used by man to satisfy his desire.

You should not care or worry about your dashboard, if it is small or big it does not matter.

Other parts of woman's body are given names that of a car, for example dashboard. Dashboard is euphemism of breasts. Dashboard is the front part of a car that contains the devices for measuring speed and distance. For the presenter to use dashboard to represent breasts is to show that a woman is like a car that is driven by a driver (man), through touching woman's breasts, man is given power to control a woman the way he wants. For the use of woman's breasts as dashboard is a sign of undermining a woman by comparing her with some parts of the car.

There are so many types of burners, an electric burner and a coal burner. This charcoal burner. Chetezo cha makaa.

Some of the sexual euphemisms used by presenter reflected a woman as an object of attracting a man, for example by using vanilla to improve the smell of Miss Victoria (vagina). Charcoal burner is a euphemism of the warmth of Miss Victoria. Miss Victoria is supposed to retain the heat or warmth for a long time as the charcoal burner does. For the presenter to use the charcoal burner to refer to retaining the heat of Miss Victoria is an evidence of undermining a woman. She is not showing us an object that can be used by man to make his Mr. Victor attractive. It is evident that a woman is supposed to do her best, to attract and satisfy her husband sexually, failure to which, she is despised as Onyango [7] says.

I smoke myself, My room and actually my husband associates this well with Mombasa raha trip, you know he comes, I do a bit of udi nakwambia za kikuyu zinasimama. (I smoke the house I tell you, the kikuyu feeling arises).

Smoking the room is spraying the room, to attract a man by all means. Room refers to Miss Victoria (Vagina). In our research we realized that, it is a woman's responsibility to do everything possible to attract a man, especially in smoking her Miss Victoria so that it can smell good to attract the man during sex.

Miss Victoria's smell keep changing, it sometimes smells good or bad, kama umekula (if you have eaten) maharagwe ama githeri, Miss Victoria atanuka githeri na maharagwe. Na wenzangu wa mijikenda you eat shark Miss Victoria smells shark. You do want to take a trip to Mombasa raha and your Miss Victoria is smelling shark.

The presenter claims that Miss Victoria smells what has been eaten if it is fish it smells fishy if beans it smells beans and to avoid that, a woman needs to smoke her room (Miss Victoria). Making a woman smoke her room is despising her and making her to be like a slave to her husband. Sex is supposed to be two people's affair (husband and wife) but it seems the presenter presents the woman as a main object to make it succeed. This is undermining a woman and making her inferior to a man.

Several parts of a woman's body have been given names that portray her inferior position in the society.

When it comes to the pleasure knob, it is all about pressure, how much pleasure it depends on you.

Pleasure knob means clitoris. This is a part of the woman's body when touched it brings some erotic feelings to the her. By the presenter giving clitoris, name pleasure knob, is despising and undermining a woman. Why did she refer to a very important part of woman body to be a pleasure knob? Every part of a human body is important and it is not good to despise some parts of it. Though the part causes pleasure when touched, it is not good to refer to it so, because it is a very important part and deserves to be respected.

Men love to go to Mombasa raha and they forget to prepare. I want to talk about a driver. A good driver takes good care of the car, checks that the tyre, oil, supporting documents are well taken care of.

The second euphemism of a woman body is supporting documents. Supporting documents are parts of a woman body that is buttocks and hips. The presenter used this term supporting documents to show

that they help in sex. Using these parts as supporting is undermining some parts of a woman's body. When these parts are despised it is a reflection of what is happening in the society where a woman is despised. Why did the presenter not give some parts of a man's body such terms? This is clear that man has advantage over woman in the society (Wiik [5]).

Now that you have known how to touch your juicy spots, now let me teach you how to touch your man.

Another euphemism of woman's body part is juicy spots. Juicy spots are body parts of a woman when touched they cause erotic feelings, for example dashboard (breasts), pleasure knob (clitoris), Athi river (thighs) and others. Juicy is something liquid, sweet and can be eaten or drunk. The presenter by referring to the sexy body parts of a woman as juicy spots, she is despising her by comparing her with edible things. Ndambuki [8]. Does she mean that those body parts are edible? Why does she not refer to any man's body parts as Juicy spots. It is undermining a woman by referring some of her body parts as juicy spots. All body parts are important and their duties very crucial. By the presenter referring some body parts of a woman as juicy spots it shows that a woman can be used by a man as an object of entertainment. This is underrating the status of a woman and refer to her as inferior to a man irrespective of her noble position in the society.

Gender is also portrayed by the use of sexual euphemisms that refer to the sexual styles. Two styles of sex used undermined a woman.

Many women like Nyambura, the missionary style ingawa (although) there are other styles like Kachuna mboga, oye, rabbit.

Nyambura style is a missionary sex style that of long time ago and is outdated. Nyambura is a female name and can be used to refer to any woman in the society. The use of Nyambura style as an outdated style that is not supposed to be used in sex is despising and undermining a woman. Why did the presenter not use a man's name to refer this unwanted and outdated style? Why use a woman's name to represent such unwanted style? This is clear indication that the presenter affected by the African traditions that despise a woman and revere a man, in that man is associated with good things and a woman with bad things.

Kuchuna mboga (picking vegetables) is another sex style is used by the presenter. Kuchuna mboga is dog style. The style is not supposed to be used in the family context. Kuchuna mboga is of women's responsibility. It is tiring, and is difficult to find a man picking vegetables in the African community but is common find a woman picking vegetables. By using kuchuna mboga as an unwanted sex style is despising and undermining a woman. Looking down upon this

work of picking vegetables is despising a woman who uses this work as a source of income and a means of feeding her family. Why did the presenter not use euphemisms of work referring to duties or works done by men like masonry, mining, engineering and others?

I am buying you a car, Mombasa raha first class, no, kamata bonnet, bonnet can only be a car.

Kamata bonnet is another style of sex. This is a fast style of sex when the woman is holding the car bonnet. Bonnet is the front part of a vehicle and contains important objects that help the vehicle to move. If bonnet has a problem the vehicle cannot move. In this style a man caress a woman in the juicy spots, after packing the vehicle and having a quickie (a fast sex). This term scorns a woman by not giving her a chance to provoke man's sexual desire. The question is: Can't a woman provoke a man's sexual desire? Also, can't a man hold the bonnet instead of a woman? Also sex is not supposed to be done in public but this kamata bonnet is done in public at the roadside. This is despising and undermining a woman, because she is in the receiving end.

Other sexual euphemisms related to females are those that show different parts of Kenya between Nairobi and Mombasa, for example Athi River, Ukambani, Mlolongo and others. Athi River are thighs. This is a town that is not so far from Nairobi. Man is given power to stop on the way to Mombasa Raha (sex) and caress some parts of a woman's body likes thighs. Comparing a woman's thighs to a town like Athi River is undermining a woman. Why such an important body part be referred to such a small town (Athi River)? Does a man have thighs, Why can't they be called or given euphemism and woman given power to caress the Man to cause erotic feeling? This is despising a woman by showing that she is supposed to be passive and not active like man.

You can compromise and take a personal car, there is so much you can do, you can determine the speed on the way, you can have stops on the way. Do you want to stop around ukambani area where you can buy bananas, oranges, pawpaws, hohos or want to go straight down.

Another place that was used as euphemisms is ukambani, ukambani is the area surrounding the breasts. The presenter explains that Mombasa is far and travellers need to make stops and rest on the way in different towns like Mutito Andei and Emali. Man has been given power to stop on the way and caress woman's breasts to arouse sexual interest as he prepares to have sex. A woman is undermined by her breasts being compared to a place like Ukambani. By the presenter giving some important parts of woman's body names of places is an evidence of despising the woman.

What do people do to temper with Miss Victoria PH?

Another euphemism that was used and portrayed gender is Miss Victoria PH. This is the amount of heat or warmth of vagina. The way of improving the warmth level of Miss Victoria, to avoid coldness that can lead to the husband running away is taught by the presenter. We realized that the presenter took very serious steps to teach women how to retain the heat of their Miss Victoria to please and satisfy their husbands. By the presenter emphasizing that a woman should maintain Miss Victoria PH is undermining woman. Why can't a man be shown how to improve his Mr. Victor? A man is given an upper hand of being made satisfied by a woman sexually, which means man is the who has gained sexual freedom than woman (Greer [1]). This is exploitation of woman at the expense of men who are highly respected.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this article was to discuss the gender portrayal in the sexual euphemisms used in the programme Connect of K24 television. It is evident that sexual euphemisms used in the programme Connect of K24 television portray gender, in that those that relate to a male are positive and revere him and those relating to female are negative and despise her. Euphemisms used are those that show private parts of a man and a woman, styles of sex and different places of the country. This article shows openly that a woman is despised, in that she is an object of entertaining a man, her works and duties are despised and whatever she does is to benefit a man. This article gives evidence that man possesses power and cannot be undermined, even if he is weak that weakness is covered by using a polite term like safari fupi.

Analysis of euphemisms can be valuable in enhancing understanding and appreciation of language, culture and history of a particular people. Euphemisms have the power to give direction in their use and explain the reality of issues in the society. As a matter of fact, gender issues cannot be avoided in research to sexual euphemisms.

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