

Gender Discrimination in English Language

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Abstracts: Language is a carrier of national culture and crystallization, which not only records the nation's material life and spiritual life of appearance, but also accumulates rich content of traditional culture connotation, language always reflects the society, so language gender discrimination is an exact reproduction of social gender discrimination. This paper applied linguistics marked theory, through the numerous examples from the composition of the English vocabulary, word meaning, word category, word order, semantic, English title, proverb seven perspectives to analyze the gender discrimination in English.

1. Introduction

Gender discrimination in today's society is a female discrimination phenomenon. According to statistics, in English there are 220 words referring to unleash woman, but only 20 words describe Bohemian man. This is a big data differences from which we can also see there is great discrimination for women in the use of English words.

2. Gender discrimination and marked theory

Gender discrimination generalized meaning: a kind of gender members discrimination against another kind of gender members, but here refers to a kind of gender members discrimination against another kind of gender members especially in the use of English language.

Markedness is an important concept in linguistics, marked theory can be used in the analysis of the language at all levels including phonological, morphological, vocabulary, semantics and disciplines, here mainly analyzes marked theory in the application of English vocabulary. British linguist John. Lyons mainly analyzes the term structure and the marked phenomenon, distinguish whether the lexical item is a mark of the three kinds of meanings: form marking, distributional marking, semantic marking. [13]

Gender discrimination in English is not formed in one day, but built up in the long period of the development of language, which leads to the variety of the causes. What causes the sexism in the English Language? There are four factors: cultural factor, physiological factor, social factor and psychological factor.

In the Holy Bible (The Books of The Old Testament): "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.' [1] Holy Bible [M]. China christianism patriotic movement committee and the Christian association of China, October 2000. P2-3. Man came to the world first while woman made from one of man's ribs was created just as a help meet for him. And she was not created until all other animals failed to meet the satisfaction of the man. From the order of the birth, it is obvious to see the different importance of man and woman. And man and woman are not equal at all because woman is only a part of man, which itself is the discrimination against women. It is said in the Holy Bible that the first sin is also committed by the woman. She was seduced by the snake into eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and having the man eat, too. At last, the woman was punished to bring forth children in pain and was ruled over by the man. From above, the superiority of men and inferiority of women is clearly seen. The Holy

Bible is actually a book of men. As Christianity is such a powerful religion in Western countries, it is unreasonable to deny that this helps to set and consolidate the inferiority of women.

(1) Physiological factor

For extended work and life together, people realized that men are tall in stature, strong in muscle and robust in physique. In contrary to men, women are small in stature, weak in physique and have more fat and less muscle than men. Women also mature more rapidly. In a word, men are stronger than women. This determines that men play a more and more important role in social and economic lives. A man's job is to work outside but a woman's job is to stay at home, do the housework and take care of the children. Women are treated as the weaker ones and they realize their own values through their marriages to men. At last, women are lower in status. They have to leech on to men and are dominated by men. Gradually, people begin to discriminate women and think that they are inferior in intelligence. This wrong perspective forms slowly and reflects in language.

(2) Social factor (Labor division)

Feminists all claim that we live in a patriarchal society: a society of men, ruled by men and for men. Patriarchy depicts men as the perfect norm against which women are measured and found lacking.

Both the Western and Eastern societies use sex, to one degree or another, in allocating tasks, activities, rights, and responsibilities. As for the job done by men and women, there is a long-stereotyped notion of what they can do. In history, there has been a division of labor--a division in which women's place was restrained at home for housework and child-care while men worked outside being the breadwinner. At last, men had dominance over women, and women had to be dependent on men. This was the turning point for women. From then on, in paternal society, slavery society and capitalist society, women had been on the bottom of society. In long and endless course of history, gender discrimination against women has been accumulated. It is due to different labor division that leads to different social status. This has been clear in ancient and modern society. Later, in addition to domestic work, women began to enter the paid work place. However, even though half of women are employed outside the home, the belief persists that woman is mainly, and primarily, in the roles of wife and mother.

Due to women's relative physical weakness and lower educational background, they do primarily the low-status, low-paying jobs. Although men also have family roles, they are defined primarily by their economic or occupational position. Thus the in the gender discrimination society has been in existence, the embodiment of which is necessarily the sexism of language.

Because of the social and cultural factors, women are always considered to be the weak. People treat women as inferior to men. They educate men to be manly, decisive, and brave while women are required to be polite, conservative, obedient, and gentle. Because women are in subordinate status in the society, they have to constrain their emotion and give up their own need to meet the satisfaction of men. As time passes, when speaking women pay more attention to the elegance and standard of language than men. They use more pleasant and polite words in the hope that they can receive other's approval. And they are taught to speak softly, to avoid contradicting others, to be obedient in communication, and to be aware of giving cues of strong confidence. They mould themselves to be inferior in their potential sub consciousness. Therefore, women try their best to strengthen their social status through their speech than men do. The lower women's position is, the more polite they are in the face of others. And the standard language they use can show their submission and politeness. This also suggests that women are in a lower position in the society

3. The Phenomenon of gender discrimination in English language

Borrowing the form mark to analysis the composition of the word. The English words in the form of symbols, in a confrontation with gender distinction between terms, said male positive term is generally not marked, but said women's negative term is a mark in nature, and its formation is in positive terms added after conversion, namely women nouns derived from male nouns, that women are attached to the male secondary status. In Table 1, we can see actor and prince are unmarked, while actress and princess are marked:

Table 1: Markedness of words

Gender	words	marked
Male	actor/prince	No
Female	actress/princess	Yes

When women are engaged in the same occupation with some men, English is often used to form composite formation, i.e. it often adds women marked word before the professional name. In Table 2, we can know pilot is unmarked and a woman pilot is marked.

Table 2: Markedness of words

Gender	words	marked
Male	pilot	No
Female	a woman pilot	Yes

From the above analyses, we can know English itself has no difference of gender. Because of the historical reasons, people are used to believing that prestige person are always males. In Table 3, we can know a woman who once receives great popularity is regarded as a special exception. Many professionals such as doctor, professor, engineer, lawyer, pilot, judge, surgeon can be used to indicate both males and females. But when indicating female's position, professional, etc., these words are created by adding a bound morpheme or by combining them with a word referring to female. Because these satisfactory jobs are traditionally viewed as ones qualified only by males. Women are just the appendant to men.

Table 3: Male positive nouns and female nouns

Masculine gender	Feminine
waiter	waitress
hero	heroine
doctor	woman doctor
surgeon	female surgeon
lawyer	lady lawyer

Phenomenon of these professional words of discrimination against women indicates that men are in the center of the social status, but women is in the social subordinate status, so many professional words put man as a suffix, although women are engaged in the profession . There are some compound words formed by word plus "man" structure, such as(chairman, businessman, congressman, newsmen, statesman, salesman, mailman, policeman, and spokesman).

history=his+story,

mankind=man+kind,

kindom=king+dominions

From the above word structure, we can learn that male is the master of history, the main body of the society. The English vocabulary tends to show male's superiority.

The expression of gender difference between a pair of words is different, male mark word usually has no mark items, its distribution range is wide, but the female marked word often has marked item, its distribution range is limited. Although human society is composed by men and women, people commonly use the word "man or mankind "when they express the meaning of "person or human". The word "man" is frequently used in English, its distribution range is wide, not only for a man also for a female. There is torus helping you to know it well.

Personal pronouns are pronouns that are said to refer, with equal likelihood, to women and men. But the English language ignores women by allowing masculine terms to be used specifically to refer to males and commonly to refer to human beings in general. The generic pronoun "he" is perhaps the most well-known example of the gender-specific of sexist language, and is frequently referred to be "he/man" language. The most significant manifestation of the sexism is in the use of generic masculine pronouns "he" and its variants "his", "him" and "himself" in such sentences as:

- (1) He who laughs last laughs best.
- (2) Everyone must do his homework well.
- (3) If anyone calls, tell him I will be back later.
- (4) Everyone should learn to solve problems himself.
- (5) Every man has his day
- (6) Men have always interested in the moon.
- (7) Women want to have more chances to take part in social activities.

Man in Sentence (5)(6) refers to "male or female", its meaning range is wide, but women in sentence (7) only refers to "female". As early as two hundred years ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are equal created ..." in the Declaration of Independence. The word "men" in this sentence refers to "all the people", it has a wide meaning range. From all the above examples, we believe that the use of male nouns and pronouns is extremely wide in daily English vocabulary. They can also indicate the position of male is superior to that of female.

Due to the vocabulary and the development of the society changes have close relations, the social change in vocabulary will also be reflected. English vocabulary semantic changes usually experience the process of expanding, narrowing, upgrading and degrading. Vocabulary semantic upgrade and degradation of the evolution process. Language itself is not the problem, but influenced by social change and social culture and restriction, which can also reflect people's social attitude and the change of the idea. In some different gender confrontation in the word, women marked-word meaning experience the semantic degradation process but male word meaning doesn't experience semantic degradation process, which has been fully embodied in the English dictionary.

Language has a tendency to neglect women, treat women as submission and also demean women. The process of words that refers to women acquiring demeaning or sexual connotations has been widely observed, this Phenomenon called semantic derogation. From the examples, we can know the female words (governess, mistress, lady) experience the process of degradation, but male words (governor, mister, lord) certainly not. ([7] LiGang, English vocabulary of sex discrimination to find out the [j]. Journal of chongqing institute of technology, 2005.4, 135-137)

In English, some nouns, they have complete equivalence of negative and positive form and meaning in the first is also an equivalence, but with the development of the society, the negative corresponding word meaning expands further and starts with a derogatory sense even with obscene semantic color, but the positive corresponding word meaning without any change, Such as:

(1) King-queen "ruler of an independent state", but the queen was given the semantic meaning as "male homosexual who acts like a woman", namely "in the gay men play female character," however, in the lesbian women play male character but can only use "butch", when it refers to the meaning of subjugation, queen has no corresponding negative derivative word, so it's replaced by the positive corresponding word.

(2) Another example: sir-madam, Phillips (1969) defines the past semantic meaning of the word "madam": madam, a Title of Honor, which is given as well in writing as speaking, to women of quality, as Princess, Dutchess, and others. "Madam" is a word that expresses the admiring feeling of a higher position female. In the year of 1901, Daily Chronicle recorded a sentence like that: the street conductors of Boston are compelled to address all their women passengers as "madam" then the semantic meaning of "madam" has been completely generalized. The Semantic meaning of Modern English "madam" tends to a derogatory sense, from the old full-time to identity status of women developing into "a keeper and procurer of woman for men to use for sexual purposes" Elainchaika, 1982(275), namely the boss of prostitutes court.

(3) Master and mistress. Both of them indicate 'someone who possesses and/or has power over someone or something else. For example: "He is my master." usually means "He is my boss." or "He has more power than me." While "She is my mistress." is more likely to be interpreted as meaning 'She is my illicit lover.' Mistress originally refers to a woman in a position of authority, control, and ownership, as the head of a household like a housekeeper, but it implies a woman who has a continuing sexual relationship with a usually married man who is not her husband and from

whom she generally receives material support.[12]

(4) Wizard and witch. Both of them can be used to refer to people with evil magic powers. Wizard also has a meaning of person with extraordinary abilities, while witch means an ugly old woman.

(5) Besides, words, which begin with either neutral or positive connotations over time, acquire negative implications and finally end up as "sexual slurs". For example, the term hussy derives from Old English huswif (housewife), which means "the female head of the house". The term gradually deteriorated to "a rustic rude woman" and finally comes to mean "an indecent, impudent woman or prostitute".

Bachelor: an unmarried man who is regarded as very suitable to be chosen as a husband spinster: (sometimes derogatory) an unmarried woman usually one who is no longer young and or seems unlikely to marry Bachelor has no derogatory sense, but spinster has. Language exists to allow us to communicate with one another. To this end, language serves two purposes: to communicate what our reality is and also what we wish it to be. So if we identify a trait in a language, such as sexism or other forms of prejudice, which only reveals a prejudice that exists in society. Language, in particular metaphor, helps form social reality. There are many metaphors vocabulary to describe a female. But often it has a totally different meaning.

(1) Food metaphor vocabulary. Some food words can also be used to refer to females, such as cheese cake (,cherry,cookie,crumpet,tart,tomato, honey, piece,peach and so on. Men often use these words to express their appreciation to women. It even includes the meaning that men treat women as food, dolls or animals.

(2) Animal metaphor vocabulary. There are also many words showing contempt for women. They embody sexual discrimination but still enjoy great popularity. For example: chick, kitten, bitch, cat, dragon, hen, cow,crone and mare-horse and so on. These are all pejorative terms for women, because animals are considered to be inferior to human beings on the earth. So using animals to refer to females indicates that females are inferior. The semantic derogation of women helps to construct female inferiority because women are confined to negative terms.

English relatives appellation terms form of female nouns to derogatory sense direction development, "mother, sister, niece" as an example:

In the 14th century, "mother " means lower-class old women, in the 17th century, the mother a word in Shakespeare's works became hysterical agent , in the modern English with a new mother in derogatory sense.

1) Gay groups is the most moving member

2) Any gay or have feminine taste, there will be a mockery, discount the meaning of

3) In any illegal or immoral relationships give people a sense of security is

4) Often those selling drugs, brothel owner or in the struggle of the people to carry guns

"Sister" in use was a prostitute, in the 16th century, Crowley's sister, and the image of prostitutes appeared "Niece" in use said reverend bastard

Eg :Many a Holy Father`s niece has softly smoothed the papal chair.

Gender discrimination in language is also reflected in word order. When men and women are presented together, usually words denoting male sex are put in front of female sex. Making females come second reflects the sexist attitude that men are superior to women. It is not hard to find male-female word order pairs in English literature, newspaper, magazines as well as in speech, such as husband and wife, father and mother, boys and girls, his and hers, son and daughter, brother and sister, host and hostess, king and queen, master and mistress, wizard and witch, Adam and Eve Jack and Jill and so on. No matter in books or on radio, even in daily dialogue, we can often read and hear such words:

(1) Good morning, boys and girls!

(2) They would have allowed males and females to go to school together.

In English, a word may have different connotations when it is used to describe different sexes. For example:

(1) Imposing

(a).He is imposing. (b). She is imposing.

Sentence (a) means “He is impressive and admirable.” While sentence (b) could be interpreted to mean that “She is disgusting and apathetic.” When the sex changes, so does the meaning.

More examples:

(a) He is professional.(He is skilled at dealing with things)

She is professional.(She is a prostitute)

(b)He is sociable.(He enjoys spending time with others)

She is sociable.(She is talkative)

(c)Tommy is easy

Jenny is easy

(d)Jack is cold

Marry is cold

(2) Loose

Loose seems a neutral word for both male and female. But “a loose woman” reminds people of “a woman considered to be sexually promiscuous” whereas “a loose man” just means “a casual man”.

(3) Tramp

It is defined as “a person with no home or job, who wanders from place to place” or “a woman considered to be sexually immoral (esp. in American English).” In the example, He/She is a tramp. For the male, tramp refers to a vagrant whereas for the female it can mean that she is promiscuous. From the above, we can see that the same word shifts from being positive to being negative once it has moved from referring to a male to a female.

(4) Big " a big man and a big women "

When "big "modify the noun word" male and female", which has completely different meaning .when put it before the word" man" ,it includes commendatory, praise meaning(strong), but for women ,it contains derogatory sense(image unbending).

Example: a wise man and a wise woman.

(5) (a.) a handsome boy (b.) a beautiful girl

"Handsome" in (a) expresses inner spirit but "beautiful" in (b) expresses external beauty, no internal ability

(1) The southern coastal area in America often has immensely destructive hurricane, but more with the female names (hurricane Besty/ Hurricane Camilla) but Male word (kind ,lord, master ,father) upgrade, their initial capital will become Christ, the Lord or God ,we can see from it: male has a higher status ,treated with respect ,but female is not.

(2) Gender discrimination lies in name. In society, only the male has real name, their name is permanent, and they regard the name as the right of men. In English, commonly small lovely things are regarded as woman's name, such as:

Ruby Jewel Pearl Ada Vanessa And the names of the men and ability, the power, such as:Wei Martin Raymond

(3) Miller and Swift refers to the female marriage address change, premarital with their father's call married with her husband's surname says (Miss, Mrs.), and men do not have this kind of title changes (Mr.)

A man of straw is worth of a woman of gold

If husband be not at home, there is nobody

Words are women, deeds are men

Husbands are in heaven whose wives scold not

The phenomenon of gender discrimination exists in English proverbs, through the above example, it is not difficult to see that women's status in society is very low, they are not the same treatment with men

4. Conclusion

From all the above aspects: we can clearly understand the gender discrimination widely exists in English vocabulary and English language, in the language context, the men and women differ in meaning, where often praises male but depreciate female .we can also learn male is superior to female and men in the center of the society, while women are subordinate status, which dates from the western history and culture.

In the previous paragraphs, sexist language use in vocabulary has been pointed out. However, it is not enough to just point out and analyze the phenomenon, but changing the gender discrimination is the most important. For the problem, what should we do, what can we do? The phenomenon is caused by many reasons. However, the elimination of linguistic gender discrimination seems to be impossible because the elimination of linguistic sexism lies in social change .Only by changing the social structure till one day when women and men own really equal status can language equality be truly achieved. Therefore, we need to take an objective look at it. Linguistic action and social action should be taken simultaneously for the purpose of eliminating sexism in language.

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