

Aspects of Linguistic Violence to Nigerian Women

Akinbiyi Adetunji

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper investigated some of the forms of linguistic violence inflicted on Nigerian women. Data were sampled from diverse linguistic groups, the media, and a commercial bank. Working within the frameworks provided by linguistic violence and feminist linguistics, it was discovered that the subtle and abusive forms of linguistic violence were used to silence and dominate Nigerian women, a situation traceable to the cultural dictates of a patriarchal, androgynous culture. A greater awareness of gender-fairness in access to language as well as in the teaching and learning of language use was recommended.

Keywords: *Gender, Dominance, Difference, Nigeria*

Introduction

Background to the Study

According to Arendt (1970, p. 35), violence concerns the “most flagrant manifestation of power”. Fliethmann (2006, p. 2) traces the etymology of “violence” to Latin and posits that the words “violence” and “force” are semantically intertwined: ... violence comes from the Latin *violare*, its stem deriving from the Latin *vis*, meaning force. Violence is thus explained as the exercise of force, whereas force, from Latin *fortis*, carries in Latin also the meaning of violence, among others (such as strength, power, etc.). Violence, thus, has to do with the exercise of power or force in any action taken by a person in relation to another. Violence on women, especially in a patriarchal African society like Nigeria, is time-worn and taken for granted, and most often, enacted by men in their relations with women. Linguistic violence, the subject of this discussion, is an instance of such power-play.

Many linguistic studies have shown how languages have been imbued with covert and overt forms of violence against women. In Nigeria, studies abound on the linguistic coding of indigenous and foreign languages to stereotype, marginalise, and ridicule women. Fakoya (2007, p. 209) considers the contextual and conversational relevance of Yoruba sexually-grounded proverbs and states that “... most Yoruba sexually oriented proverbs are somehow misogynistic”. Omenugha (2007) identifies the use of sexist language for the unfair portrayal of Nigerian women in English-medium Nigerian dailies. Tsaaior (2009) orchestrates the strategic and ideological use of naming to stereotype and oppress women in Tiv oral narratives. Yusuf (1994, 1998) presents the gender bias and cumulative misogyny in English and Yoruba proverbs. In all, women have had to adapt to or accept various forms of linguistic oppression and abuses, cumulatively underlining their “second citizen” status.

This study focuses on the manifestation of violence in language as used for, about, and by the Nigerian woman, either as traceable to the linguistic preferences of the two sexes (male, female) or as culturally-inflicted. To achieve this aim, I intend to relate feminist linguistics to linguistic violence, identify specific instances of linguistic violence on Nigerian women, and recommend solutions to the instances of violence so identified. Although a few efforts have gone into conceptualizing linguistic violence to Nigerian women, this study goes a step further by aggregating existing views, replenishing them with newer insights, and charting ways towards gender equity in language use.

Theoretical Perspectives

Feminist Linguistics

Feminist Linguistics (henceforth, FL) gleans the convergence of language and gender from the feminist perspective. While language can be loosely defined as the arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a given community communicate and interact, “gender refers to the traits assigned to a sex – what maleness and femaleness stand for – within different societies and cultures” (Litosseliti, 2006, p.11). Specifically, FL, according to Litosseliti (2006, p. 23), “aims to theorise gender-related linguistic phenomena and language use, and to explicitly link these to gender inequality or discrimination, on the assumption that linguistic change is an important part of social change”. FL, in essence, is emancipatory. FL research is established on the premise that men (males) and women (females) use language differently, and this demarcation informs the two major theories of gender linguistics – dominance and difference.

The dominance theorists posit that women are disadvantaged, and inferior to men, in language use. According to Lakoff (1975, pp. 8-19), women tend to use “meaningless” particles (e.g. “oh dear”), weaker expletives (than men’s) (e.g. “goodness”), “special” adjectives (e.g. “charming”, “sweet”), tag questions, and polite requests (e.g. “Will you please close the door?”). Thus, women’s language is considered “lacking, weak, trivial, and hesitant – in short deficient when compared to men’s language” (Litosseliti, 2006, p. 28). Spender (1980) furthers Lakoff’s position, positing that women were not privileged to define or design language at creation and so had to learn to be carried along in its use. This subjugation is traced to the Biblical story of creation, where God handed Adam (not Eve) the opportunity to name all plants and animals in the Garden of Eden. As such, the neutral or natural language is the man’s while any instance of language appropriated by or attributable to the woman is considered a deviation (Goodard & Patterson, 2000). Inferentially, the woman would either be silent or silenced, except she was willing to use language according to the man’s rules.

For the dominance theorists, women are usually “negotiating their relatively powerless position in interaction with men” (Cameron, 1996, p. 39). More specifically, interruptions, turn-constructions, verbosity, and floor management in verbal interactions are seen to be less in the grasp of women than men (Cameron, 1996; Thomas & Wareing, 1999). However, the difference theorists were to reconceptualise the perceived asymmetric power relations between men and women.

The difference theory views the demarcation of women’s and men’s language as traceable to the two sexes’ different socialisations, and presents “women’s language not just as different, but as positively valued” (Litosseliti, 2006, p. 37). Tannen (1991), most prominently, highlights this socio-cultural difference, claiming that females and males are trained or brought up from childhood to comply with different conversational styles, “private speaking”/“rapport talk” for the females and “public speaking”/“report talk” for the males. In short, men and women use language differently because they belong to two different subcultures. In this direction, FL researchers have tried to prove that women ask a lot of questions (Fishman, 1990), are less-assertive in language use (Wareing, 1999) and use “gossip” for conversational solidarity (Holmes, 1995).

However, many FL researchers have equated “difference” and “dominance”. Cameron (1998, p. 451) prefers to read gender differences in language use as differences in “role, status or power ... that the same person can behave differently depending on she or he is talking to, from what position and for what purpose”. Crawford (1995) holds the view that difference has almost always been put to anti-feminist purposes since only females are found linguistically deficient, and told or trained to adjust to particular communication norms.

Linguistic Violence

Linguistic Violence (LV) is a concept used to capture the psychological and social use of any instance of language to abuse, offend, or hurt somebody or people. It emphasises the linguistic situation of two people or groups asymmetrically, along the lines of power or status, whereby one person or group occupies a higher, and therefore oppressive, position in relation to the other. Gay (1998) has classified LV into three broad types – subtle, abusive, and grievous – in a continuum stretching from the minimally intensive to the maximally intensive.

Subtle LV concerns an unconscious use of language by persons or groups to subjugate other persons or groups. McGhee (1979) submits that men from early childhood have the greater tendency, than

women, to use humour oppressively: boys learn to tell aggressive or face-threatening, especially sexual jokes and girls grow up to just laugh and be amused. Similarly, the use of a single term of address, “Mr”, for the male folk, regardless of the addressee’s age or marital status unlike the bifurcation of “Miss” and “Mrs” to differentiate the female folk, along the same lines (as for the males), manifests subtle LV.

Also, generic masculine terms, represented severally in the pronouns “he”, “him”, and “his” have been accepted, until very recently, to be adequately representative of both males and females. So the popular maxim “Man is born free yet everywhere in chains” refers not just to males but females as well. In the earliest times, as evidenced by the Holy Bible, the masculine noun or pronoun is preferred when the sex of the addressee is not stated or when both male and female referents are relevant. This explains why women understand their inclusion in the category of addressees in the two Bible verses below, although the pronoun (he) and noun (men), therein, are male-specific. “... whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid (Proverbs 12:1)”. “But I say to you that for every idle word men speak, they will give account for it in the day of judgement (Matthew 12:36)”.

The abusive forms of LV are shown in the conscious use of offensive expressions in “racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist discourse” (Gay, 1998, p. 545). At the sexist level, the male folk are addressed by various neutral or “macho” terms like “men”, “guys”, “dudes”, and “blokes” while the females are called by derogatory or demeaning names like “gals”, “girls”, “babes”, “bitches”, and “whores”. Armstrong (2001), investigating (gangsta) rap music submits that this form of oppositional culture enhances patriarchal hegemony. Studying a total of four hundred and ninety songs, he concludes that rap artistes report and relish the abuse, rape and death of women.

Grievous forms of LV include, inter alia, “warist, totalitarian and genocidal language” (Gay, 1997, p.470). Such expressions which perform this most extreme form of violence are used for the psychological and social silencing or elimination of a group of people. For instance, Rudd (2004, p. 49) contends that President George Bush’s employment of “definite noun phrases as first mentions of previously unshared referents in order to achieve the hidden didactic goal of pre-empting counter arguments” was manipulatively used to conscript the American public to aggression and intimidate Iranians into silence.

Yet, there are also instances of self-inflicted forms of LV. Very often, women express their penchant for “accommodation”, to a fault, bringing about instances of self-demeaning language use. Studying a total of one hundred and fifty North American male and female stand-up comedians, Russell (2002) submits that women use more self-deprecatory forms of humour than men, and also inflict subtle and abusive LV on themselves. Having delineated the major forms of linguistic violence, I shall, in the next section, situate the discussion in the Nigerian environment.

The Nigerian Context

Nigeria is essentially a patriarchal society, where the male child is preferred, the man is the “lord” and the child is expected to inherit his/her father’s (not mother’s) property. In this society, all aspects of human identification and socialization pitch the man at the top and the woman below, in an almost permanent hierarchical structure.. This situation is also reflected in language use.

Within the dominance paradigm, Nigerian women are either silent or silenced. In most Nigerian linguistic groups, wives are not expected to speak, whenever their husbands are also part of a multi-participant conversation (for example, family meetings). And if they would, the wives are expected to, firstly, seek their husbands’ consent, either linguistically or paralinguistically. It is only for “unserious” comments or banter that such women may be allowed the freedom to self-select their turns (to speak). As such, women lose their vocality in mixed-sex dialogues, where “... vocality refers to audibility in voicing one’s views” (Okereke, 1998, p.134).

Among the Baatonu-Baruba people of Kwara State, the woman’s voice is almost “seized” by her in-laws, once she gets married. Perchance she is offended by any of her in-laws, regardless of the offender’s age, the woman is expected to accept the situation with equanimity, and not utter a single word, until she has the opportunity to report to her husband. Her husband may then complain, on her behalf.

In the traditional Igbo society, the male child is preferred to the female. Moreover, a mother of solely female children is inferior to a mother of a single male child. Tsaaior (2009, p. 94) has also identified and interpreted the silencing and marginalisation of women in the naming practices of the Tiv people of the Middle Belt area of Nigeria:

This translates into a regime of silence and muteness foisted on the female whose language becomes silence. With silence comes an existence on the margins or peripheries of the society. With silence also come domination, exploitation, repression and lack of expression.

Interestingly, we encounter the subordination of women in language use in a commercial bank, a place expected to be gender-sensitive. For example, one of the mission statements of Union Bank, one of the biggest commercial banks in Nigeria “Every worker should do his duty” reflects and gender insensitivity, especially when the pronoun “his” is underlined and thus, foregrounded. This confirms the Bank’s presupposition that “his” includes “her”. Likewise, in the Nigerian print media, there are still instances of the use of the male pronoun, “he”, to identify both male and female referents. For example, in the *Daily Sun* (edition of July 28, 2009, p. 11), a news item is presented in which a woman is referred to as a “chairman”: “Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mrs. Farida Waziri, has said tough time awaits corrupt public office holders and other category of fraudsters in the country.” Moreover, the use of the tag, “Mrs”, to indicate the marital status of Farida Waziri, resonates with the common sexist practice in news discourse to make women appendages of men, and by extension, render women invisible (Omenugha, 2007).

Still from the “dominance” perspective, the Igbo woman is expected to display a linguistic behaviour which can be interpreted as “talking like a woman”. This subtle form of LV demands that the woman be polite, defer, use a low pitch of voice, and give in in any conversation with the man (Nwoye, 1998). Likewise, among the Urhobo people of the Delta area of Southern Nigeria, a married woman defers, in some unique ways to all her in-laws, especially through greeting or salutation. There are two major forms of greeting a person, one whom you are meeting for the first time in the Urhobo culture:

- *mavo* (how are you)
- *mingwo* (my knee is on the ground)

While “mavo” is used by interactants of equal statuses or by a person of “higher status” (older, richer, more recognized in the society) to someone of a “lower status” (younger, poorer, less recognized in the society) to exchange greetings, “mingwo” can also be uttered as the initial request for greeting, by a person of a lower status. As such, the woman who utters “mavo” while greeting a younger in-law would be deemed to have erred or displayed a high level of rudeness: she would be expected to say “mingwo” (sometimes with her knees actually touching the ground) and await the reply *vrendo* (you may stand up).

From a similar perspective, Yoruba wives are linguistically subordinate in their relationships with Yoruba husbands. Though this falls within the ambience of subtle LV, it speaks volumes of the power inequality between two lovers in the Yoruba setting. It is considered unethical for a Yoruba woman to address her husband by his first name, especially in the presence of visitors, strangers, or in-laws. Therefore, she selects between a teknonym (a compound of “baba” (father) and a name of the man’s child, e.g. “Baba Wale”) (Akindele, 1991) and a pet-name (e.g. “Olowoorimi” (one who has paid for my head or one who owns me)) (Salami, 2004).

Even the sociolinguistic variable of the language user’s level of education has done little to alter the situation. Nowadays, educated Yoruba women use any of the following father-figure identification terms to refer to their husbands:

- neutral - “daddy”,
- self-exclusive - “daddy e” (singular) “your daddy”; “daddy *yin*” (plural) “your daddy”
- self-inclusive - “daddy *wa* (plural) “our daddy”

The “more civilized” or “less traditional” women mask their linguistic subordination with such terms of endearment as “Dee”, “Dear”, “Honey”. Salami (2004, p. 3) summarises aptly: “As wives, Yoruba women are expected, by socialization to defer to their husbands who are considered their social superiors”.

Dovetailing with this is the extended semantic scope of “oko” (husband). Although “oko” is denotatively used to define a woman’s romantic relationship with a man, it could carry connotative meanings. It

could, for example, be used to mean “master” or “superior”. So a boxer can say of another, “oko mi niyen” (that’s my master), while referring to his or her superior in the boxing-ring. Also, a woman may put “oko” to metaphorical uses to praise, console or persuade a child, regardless of the child’s biological sex (Yusuf, 2002). And so when a woman utters any of the following expressions, she might just be addressing a toddler.

- *O se, oko mi* (Thank you, my husband)
- *Ma binu, oko mi* (Don’t be angry, my husband)
- *Jo, oko mi* (Please (oblige), my husband)

Whichever connotation of “oko” is applied, the male gender is being appreciated or respected. Incidentally, the corresponding female tag “aya” or “iyawo” is connotatively used to refer to a weakling or inferior person. Thus, when a Yoruba person asks of a set of female twins, Tani oko, tani aya? (who is male who is female?) or a Scrabble player says of another, “iyawo mi niyen” (that’s my wife), “aya” and “iyawo” are negative terms referring to “weakling” and “inferior person”, respectively.

In the traditional Igbo society, women are not allowed to “crack” or utter proverbs in the presence of men. Although proverbs are coded linguistic expressions available to all language users in all cultures for the seasoning of discourse, Igbo women are only allowed access to these linguistic forms in their single-sex conversational settings. As a corollary, the Igbo woman is not allowed to initiate the clarion-call, “Igbo kwenu” (Igbo people are listening), her voice can only be heard in the response chant, “ya” (yes).

Locating abusive forms of LV in the Nigerian environment comes with a rich harvest. Yoruba proverbs are replete with instances of female dehumanization and deprecation. We encounter examples of proverbial language, where women are compared to “animals, food, plants, property and trouble” (Yusuf, 1998, p. 63). The demeaning content of the proverb “*O o ni obirin n’ile, o ni o o fe aje, se o o fe iya re ni?* (You don’t have a wife at home yet you say you don’t want (to marry) a witch, would you marry your mother?) rests in its identification of witchcraft as characteristic of the spiritual essence of women. The absolution of the referent’s mother from the negative connotation of witchcraft only reflects the sentiments which the Yoruba usually share and display, which makes them believe that those dear to them are the only saints in the midst of sinners.

The ascription of a babyish personality to the Nigerian woman is also worth mentioning. It has almost become a convention, as evidenced by the lyrics of popular Nigerian musicians, that women are babies. The following code-mixed extract from one of the albums of Wasiu Ayinde, a Yoruba folk musician, depicts the woman as a baby: “*Baby mi show colour re, ka jo ma rocking ...* (My baby, be forthcoming, so that we can frolic together ...). The Nigerian woman is thus defined by such babyish characteristics as “inexperience”, “being impressionable”, “adventure”, “needing care and protection” (Yusuf, 1994, 2002).

Even in tertiary educational settings, where people are expected to be more gender-tolerant, misogynist tendencies, of the subtle LV type, prevail. Yusuf (1994) explicates the use of two related, slangy female tags, common among Nigerian university undergraduates (of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife) in the mid-1980’s – “motherless babies”, “babiless mothers”. “Motherless babies” is a collective term for young, fresh, adventurous, undergraduate female students who were usually accommodated in Mozambique Hall while “babiless mothers” names the “stale” and therefore, unattractive, nearing-graduation ladies, usually housed in Moremi Hall. Both tags were coined and almost exclusively used by the male students to demean their female colleagues. The “babiehood”, it can be observed is retained in the two tags, to illustrate the gendering of the nomenclatures.

Interestingly, just a few kilometres away, a couple of years later (late 1980’s), the male students of the University of Ibadan, came up with their own female derogatory terms, “akwaya” and “bushmeat”. A female undergraduate of this famous university had struggled to pronounce the word “acquired”, as it was being whispered to her by her well-wishers, when asked at a beauty pageant to give the full meaning of AIDS: she could only come up with what sounded like “a-k-w-a-y-a”. Henceforth, all female students, fresh or stale, diploma, undergraduate or postgraduate, became “akwaya”.

The term “bushmeat” was coined as a tag for any “strange” female lover of the university’s male student. This “strangeness” belonged in her not being a student of the University of Ibadan, even if she schooled in any other university in the world. “Bushmeat” is ordinarily a Nigerian English expression for “game”, an expensive, delicious kind of meat cherished because it is usually hard to come by.

“Bushmeat” thus functions as a conceptual metaphor, denoting a juicy, desired “female dish”. The compounding of the two free morphemes “bush” and “meat”, therefore, extends their semantics to conceptualise a delicious meal which comes from a strange land or abroad. It is worthy of note that this uncomplimentary onomastic expression was reserved for women alone and “strange” men had no corresponding tag. It should be noted that the grievous forms of LV have hardly been visited on Nigerian women. Having sketched the context of LV in Nigeria, I would now go on to make a case for gender equity in language use.

Recommendations

Linguistic violence, or any other form of violence at that, to Nigerian women negates the idea of gender equality and is thus unacceptable. In this section, I suggest some solutions to the identified instances of LV. At the level of subtle LV, one major area of interest is the use of the generic noun or pronoun. A solution lies in the use of “person” or “human being” in place of “man”, so that we may substitute “chairperson” for “chairman” and “all human beings are born free” would replace “all men are born free”. For pronouns, the third person, gender-neutral, pronoun “they” is becoming increasingly popular today at the expense of the juxtaposed pairs “he/she” or “his/her”. Yusuf and Olateju (2004) make a case for the singular “they”, despite their observation of its relative unpopularity among Nigerian teachers and students. The singular “they” has also been found in the recent editions of such standard and usually recommended dictionaries as the *Oxford Dictionary of Contemporary English*. And so, despite the seeming number disagreement between the pronouns “they” and their antecedent “one of the correspondents” in the extract below, the sentence is grammatically acceptable: “The level of confusion on the part of one of the correspondents who teaches at the secondary school level is shown in the fact that they indicated in Section B that they had never heard of singular “they”, but they had used it before (Yusuf & Olateju, 2004, p. 173).

Old habits, they say, die hard but die they eventually will if conscious efforts are made to kill them. Lamidi (2009) advocates the creation of more awareness about gender-fair language, especially the use of gender-fair pronouns. Specifically, he recommends the institution of enlightenment campaigns to sensitise all Nigerians about gender fairness in English Language, the inclusion of gender-fair language in grammar books, and the encouragement of teachers to learn and teach gender-fair language. If Nigerians find the singular “they” a little far-fetched, at least they can distinguish the sexes and genders with the traditional pronouns (“his”, “her”, etc.) rather than stick to generic pronouns.

The muting or linguistic obscuring of women in “in-law settings” is fast losing its appeal. Although the hegemonic situation of culture in the power dynamics of the Nigerian domestic environment cannot be wished away, it can be reviewed and renewed with more liberal, less androgynous linguistic performances, after all the world itself is in constant flux of change. Access to formal and informal education, with all its liberating possibilities, is helping to relax some of these rigid manifestations of LV (Salami, 2004).

The case of the use of demeaning slangy expressions (e.g. “akwaya”) to refer to female university students need not be taken too seriously. Slangy terms, since they are products of contemporary social values and events, go as fast as they come. As slangy terms are often coined by linguistic groups for self-preservation and other-exclusion, no one can successfully prevent a regular designing and fostering of such linguistic forms.

The immutability of particular linguistic practices also applies to Biblical registers. The generic male noun or pronoun has come to stay in the Bible, probably because lexicographers of revised editions feel that changing the misogynous lexical sets would amount to tampering with its (Bible’s) originality and, thus, diminishing its spiritual efficacy.

Yoruba women’s metaphorical use of the lexical set, “*oko mi*” (my husband) for the purposes of praising, consoling or persuading even a little child need not be changed. The sociosemantic connotation of such an expression dwarfs its literal denotation: the woman has only decided to transfer, momentarily, the affection, concern, and care she has for her husband to the child. Women should also be less complicit in their linguistic subjugation. In environments (e.g. politics, governance) where they are supposed to be heard, Nigerian women have largely remained silent. There is thus the need for women to be more visible in the public spheres, where their voices can be heard.

Conclusion

Thus far, I have tried to indicate, in this study, how linguistic violence is being visited on Nigerian women, drawing broadly on data from the linguistic practices of some ethno-linguistic groups. This study posits the intersection of feminist-linguistics and linguistic violence, locating this oppressive situation of language in men's age-long unconscionable power over language, in cultural linguistic norms, and in women's complicitous (in) actions. Of the types of LV identified in the literature, the subtle and abusive forms are evident in the linguistic oppression of Nigerian women. Nigerian women would suffer less linguistic violence when they are seen in their uniqueness and pluralities, a multifaceted manifestation triggered by status, preference, task, and even sexuality. The linguistic situation of Nigerian women surely has more space for linguistic research.

References

- Akindele, F. (1991). And how shall I address you: A study of teknonym as an aspect of linguistic etiquette in "Yoruba". In F. A. Soyoye & L.O. Adewole (Eds.), *In Honour of Professor Ayo Bamgbose* (pp.38-47). Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Arendt, H. (1970). *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.
- Armstrong, E. C. (2001). Gangsta misogyny: A content analysis of the portrayals of violence against women in rap music, *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 8(2), 96-126.
- Cameron, D. (1996). The language-gender interface: challenging cooptation. In V. Bergvall, J. Bing, & A. Freed (Eds.), *Rethinking language and gender research: Theory and practice* (pp. 31-53). London: Macmillan.
- Cameron, D. (1998). Gender, language and discourse: A review essay. *Signs*, 23(4), 945-973.
- Crawford, M. (1995). *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language*. London: Thousand Oaks.
- Fakoya, A. (2007). Sexually grounded proverbs and discourse relevance: Insights from Yoruba language. In M. Olateju, R. Taiwo, & A. Fakoya (Eds.), *Towards the understanding of discourse strategies* (pp. 192-215). Agolwoye: Olabisi Onabanjo University Press.
- Fishman, P. (1990). Conversational insecurity. In D. Cameron (Eds.), *The feminist critique of language: A reader* (pp. 234-250). New York: Routledge.
- Fliethmann, A. (2006). The violence of representation. In S. Scarparo and S. McDonald (Eds.), *Violent depictions: Representing violence across cultures* (pp. 1-15). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Gay, N. C. (1997). The reality of linguistic violence against women. In L. O'Toole, and J. Schiffman, (Eds.), *Gender violence: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 467-473). New York: New York University Press.
- Gay, N. C. (1998). The Practice of Linguistic Nonviolence. *Peace Review*, 10(4), 545-547.
- Goodard, A. & Patterson, L. M. (2000). *Language and Gender*. London: Longman.
- Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, Men, and Politeness*. London: Longman.
- Holy Bible. (1982). *The new king James version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lamidi, M. T. (2009). Gender-neutral pronoun usage among selected second language users of English in Nigeria. In A. Odebunmi, A. E. Arua, & S. Arimi (Eds.), *Language, gender and politics: A festschrift for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf* (pp. 191-211). Lagos: Concept Publications.
- Litosseliti, L. (2006). *Gender and Language: Theory and Practice*. London: Hodder Education.
- MacArthur, T. (1996). *The Oxford Companion of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McGhee, P. (1979). The role of laughter and humor in growing up female. In C. Kopp (Eds.), *Becoming Female* (pp. 199-209). New York: Plenum Press.

- Nwoye, O. (1998). Linguistic gender difference in Igbo. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 12, 87-102.
- Okereke, G. E. (1998). African gender myths of vocality and gender dialogue in African literature. In M. E. M. Kolawole (Eds.), *Gender perceptions and development in Africa* (pp. 133-158). Lagos: Arrabon Academic Publishers.
- Omenugha, K. A. (2007). Playing unfair: The synergy of culture and sexism in Nigerian news discourse. In R. Taiwo, A. Odebunmi, & A. Adetunji (Eds.), *Perspectives on media discourse* (pp.156-181). Munich: Lincom Europa.
- Rudd, P. W. (2004). Weapons of mass destruction: The unshared referents of Bush's rhetoric. *Pragmatics*, 14 (4), 499-525.
- Russell, D. (2002). Self-deprecatory humor and the female comic: Self-destruction or comedic construction? *Thirdspace*, 2 (1).
- Salami, O. L. (2004). Deference and subordination: Gender roles and other variables in addressing and referring to husbands by Yoruba women. *Linguistik Online*, 21(4).
- Spender, D. (1980). *Man made language*. London: Routledge.
- Tannen, D. (1991). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. London: Virago.
- Thomas, L., & Wareing, S. (Eds., 1999) *Language, society and power: An introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Tsaaio, J. T. (2009). Gender politics, ideology and naming strategies in Tiv oral narratives. In A. Odebunmi, A. E. Arua, & S. Arimi (Eds.), *Language, gender and politics: A festschrift for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf* (pp. 85-101). Lagos: Concept Publications.
- Wareing, S. (1999). Language and Gender. In L. Thomas & S. Wareing (Eds.), *Language, society and power: An introduction* (pp. 65-82). London: Routledge.
- Yusuf, Y. K. (1994). From 'motherless babies' to 'babiless mothers': A sexist metaphorical transition of female undergraduates. *Women and Language*, XVII (2), 30-32.
- Yusuf, Y. K. (1998). Gender bias and images of women in English and Yoruba proverbs: A cross-cultural approach". In M. E. M. Kolawole (Eds.), *Gender perceptions and development in Africa* (pp. 63-82). Lagos: Arrabon Academic Publishers.
- Yusuf, Y. K. (2002). Sexism, English & Yoruba. *Linguistik Online*, 11 (2).
- Yusuf, Y. K., & Olateju, M. A. (2004) "Singular 'they' and Nigerian examiners of school certificate English". In K. Owolabi & E. Dasyva (Eds.). *Forms and Functions of English and Indigenous Language in Nigeria (A Festschrift in Honour of Ayo Banjo)* (pp. 148-173). Ibadan: Group Publishers.