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CONFRONTING GENDER INEQUALITY THROUGH LANGUAGE CHOICES: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENESIS EVE CREATION NARRATION

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ABSTRACT

Language is in the form it assumes because of what it has evolved to portray. Language is utilized to express meanings and perform various functions in different contexts and situations of our daily lives. Precisely speaking, lexical options applied severally and collectively do have appropriate semantic implications. This paper, 'Confronting Gender Inequity in Africa through Language Choices: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Genesis Eve Creation Narration' is organized within the scheme of inter-connectivity between Semantics and Discourse Analysis. A Critical Discourse Analysis of the creation of Eve from Adam's one rib (a Biblical story) and how the several misinterpretation of these alien views have brought pains, distortion, disillusionment, hardened emotions, burden, humiliation, subordination, assaults, low self-values, feeble and negative indices and second class citizenship on the female folks, instead of highlighting love, subtlety, tender-heartedness portrayed by the romantic story. Common core items in the biblical narrative like companion, alone, helper, suited, one of his ribs, closed, removed, "made the ribs into a woman and brought her to the man", "this is it', were highlighted and analyzed with a view to foregrounding gender inequality as a global challenge in Africa. The paper suggested recruitment of mentors and unbiased interpreters to monitor preaching and encourage preaching geared towards the upward mobility of the female ego and development of women in Africa. More prestige task and fewer routine ones should be assigned to woman. Stereotypes should be banished. The paper concluded that, good perception of females equals high utilization of female resources for overall growth of Higher Education in Africa.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Language Choices, Critical Discourse, Genesis Eve, Creation Narration.

Introduction

The persistence of gender inequality in Africa and across the globe warrants a closer scrutiny of gender Ideologies in texts. This study looks at how the identities of Adam and Eve are reflected in the creation narrations in Genesis 1 and 2. The Bible is known to present blue prints for living, including ideals concerning gender, identities and roles, thereby reinforcing or undermining dominant ideologies. Thus, inequalities between men and women are ideologically sustained and reproduced by text books VanDijk (2009) and Enang, E and Urujzian, V. (2013a).

Ideology in this regards refers to attitudes, sets of beliefs, values and doctrines with reference to religious, political, social and economic life which shape the individuals and groups perception and through which reality is constructed and interpreted. The Choice of critical Discourse Analysis is to the fact that CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) sees strongly a

relationship between languages and ideology and believes that every instance of language use is produced from an ideological perceptive.

Conducting a research in CDA is not exactly like conducting a research in the other disciplines. One thing that a CDA researcher has in mind is that, a text either spoken or written is never ever neutral. A CDA researcher seeks to unveil the ideology behind every narration. On the whole, a CDA researcher always focus on areas such as feminist discourse, gender inequality, sexual harassment, Stereotype and general representation of females in male dominated sectors like religion, political, law and medical fields etc. CDA analysis relies on both spoken discourse, but mostly relies more on written discourses since power is not only enacted in spoken discourse. Written discourse also reflects the societal power structure and reveals the ideology and mind of the writer.

Since Critical Discourse Analysis looks at social practices not just in terms of social relationships, but also in terms of their implications for things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social good and power. Therefore the language choices in use forms part and parcel of specific social practices and social practices usually have implications for inherent political things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods and power (James, 2014) and (Enang, E, Urujzian, V. and Udoka, S. 2013).

Conceptual Clarifications: Language and Language Choices

Man is the product of the physical and social environment. Both environments find practical expression through language. Language therefore, plays a pivotal role in the development of the individual. Language is the channel for transmitting the patterns of living. It is the medium through which the child learns to act as a member of society. It enables people to communicate with each other (intra individual communication). It is through languages that people transmit information, ideas, attitudes and emotions to one another. Language is the instrument which is used in shaping humans. The above points were made clear as Enang, E, and Urujzian, V, (2013b) and Osakwe (2013) post that:

> *...One of the mysteries of language deserving constant investigation is its communicative ability. Its limitless avenues and patterns of social interactions, revealing an unfathomable depth of the human creative reservoir (p.23).*

Scholarly studies of language and language choices can be inexhaustibly fascinating to a minority as our senses of the meaning of words touch our private lives very nearly. Man is the only creature that uses words intentionally and habitually. Humans use words in order to tell somebody something, which is to 'communicate'. This study is not interested in describing data so that one can admire the intricacy of language, though such intricacy is indeed admirable. The major focus is to describe the way language works, illuminates, provides, contributes and intervenes on important issues/problems in this great area of interest; gender inequality in Africa and how gender inequality is made active (prominent) through language choices. James (2004) and (Enang, E, Urujzian, V. and Udoka, S. 2013) state that:

> *...any use of language gains its meaning form the "game" or practice of which it is a part and which it is enacting...beyond this general point, language is a key way we*

> *Humans make and break our world, our institutions, and our relationships through how we deal with social goods ...*(p. 10)

The source believes that language has meaning only in and through social practices, practices which often leaves one morally compliant with harms and injustices unless one attempts to transform them. Fairclough (1989) and Vero-Ekpris Gladstone Urujzian (2022) have this to say about the language and language choices:

> *"Language can be defined and studied in at least two ways. The first is to study language use and variation as a shared code in every individual. Learners make choices about how to use language based on individual competence, viewing as less important the influence of the local community, the broader culture, religion, race, class or gender on how language is used.*

Language can be shaped to change behaviours and change one's perception of self (identity); thus, our language choices are very influential. This again takes one to James' view of language as that, which discourse works with. According to this source, discourse is that which refers to both language and cultural models, ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing and using various symbols, tools and objects to enact a particular socially recognizable identity (James, 2014: 21) and Vero-Ekpris G. Urujzian (2022). From the above language is recognized as the soul of any discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis

This study is rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis CDA (James, 2014; Rogers, 2005) and Enang, E and Urujzian, V. (2013a). Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on how language produces and reproduces domination and abuse of power, engendering injustice and inequality (VanDijk, 2009:96). Critical discourse Analysis represents a popular research method and theory that is often employed to investigate language learning and teaching (Case, 2005; Rogers, 2004) and (Enang and Urujzian 2013b).

CDA is an approach to doing Discourse Analysis that emphasizes the study of language and discourse in social institutions. It draws on post structuralist discourse theory and critical linguistics to focus on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through written and spoken texts in different linguistic contexts. CDA produces insight into the way discourse reproduces (or resist) social and political inequality, power abuse or domination. Taiwo (2007) and (Enang, Urujzian and Udoka 2013) were of the opinion that: CDA focuses on the way discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of power and dominance in society. Several scholars have worked within the CDA framework on areas such as media discourse, political discourse, gender discourse, hospital discourse, office discourse, etc.

CDA has a strong historical link with an approach developed by a group based at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s. From the above, a researcher conducting a research on CDA is concerned with the way social power is used for interactions i.e. the way social power is abused to reflect dominance, manipulation, discrimination and every form of inequality. CD is more concerned with how the dominated resist dominance linguistically, the enactment

and resistance of power is central to CDA. CDA is Fairclaugh's (1989) term, which describes the interface of language and society. Behind CDA, is the functional and systemic linguistics of which King (1995) and Vero-Ekpris Urujzian (2022) opine that, language structure is shaped by the social and personal need and ultimately, social and institutional relations and identities constituted by language practice and choice of structure. Thus critical discourse analysis is a contemporary approach to the study of language and discourses in social institutions.

In simple terms, CDA is based on the opinion that story is not a neutral source of information, but driven by an underlying set of beliefs and assumptions set by the authors of the story. Mastery of any language demands that or charges one with the responsibility of understanding the content of each story and above all uncovering the underlying assumptions and beliefs. The more reasons this paper seeks to look at the ways that, creation narratives address problems around gender and class/identity, (Enang, E and Urujzian, V. (2013a).

The goal of critical discourse analysis is not just to describe how language works or even to offer deep explanations, the goal is to speak to and perhaps intervene in institutional, social or political issues, problems and controversies in the world. It deals primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse, injustice and inequality. CDA is motivated by pressing social issues like gender inequality; it hopes to clarify such issues for better understanding. DA is always on the side of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality; that is the reason this work might show biases to the dominated female gender. CDA critically targets the power elites that enacts, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore gender/social inequality and injustice, (Enang, E. and Urujzian, V. (2013a).

Gender Inequality

The issue of gender inequality has over the years attracted treatises, conferences and several seminar papers f which web pages have been opened to deliberate on this. Gender inequality is the subjugation, subordination and discrimination which women suffer in the hands of men. Proponents of Gender equality are of the opinion that men and women are inherently equal and be treated as such. These feminists are united in opposition to patriarchy, a system that subjugates and oppresses women (Ernst-Slavit, 1997 and (Enang, E. and Urujzian V. 2013b).

Gender inequality can be referred to as an Unequal treatment or perception of individuals based on gender (sexes). It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure and hormonal differences. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical. Gender binary systems may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimension of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions whether empirically grounded or socially constructed (James, 2014) and Vero-Ekpris Urujzian (2022).

Discrimination against women cannot be over-emphasized. The constitution of many countries has denied women, the right to hold public offices, vote, own property or pursue a career. More so, even when these rules are not there, the societal norms, taboos are also binding on women. For these reasons,

Enang, E. Urujzian, V. and Udoka, S. (2013) and James (2014) maintain that:

> *Gender discrimination is so firmly embedded in the history of humanity that it is often not perceived as discrimination. Women have always been burdened with unpaid household work... this inequality transcends all relations: labor, politics, religion and socio economic practices (p.18).*

From the above, religion is one of the top contributors to gender inequality in the world. Should religion be erased? No. In fact, religion is one of the many things that guide the masses in living a good and peaceful life.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (2006), gender inequality hinders the growth of countries, development of individuals and the progress of societies; thus, the closing of gender gap is very essential. If women are not given equal rights the economy is bound to suffer. Productivity will suffer, competitiveness will suffer and the economy will not grow at the desired speed. Unfortunately, enough progress has not been made to close this gender gap. The cultural issues continue to be, Cultural issues and gender stereotyping is on the increase (Case, 2005) and (Enang, E. and Urujzian, V. 2013b).

The role of women in enhancing development has been widely acknowledged globally among development economist and policy makers (Rogers, 2004). Concern for the common good and the well-being of all citizens is one of the highest virtues. Recognizing the importance of gender equality is another virtue that is equivalent to helping people to become economically self-sufficient, enhancing individual happiness and enriching individual lives.

This paper examines the role of lexical choices in articulating dominance that results in gender inequality. This choice may reveal overt support for dominance and concealment of the female identity and ego, thus making compliance and acceptance of the female position as lower breed. Power is enacted through choices of words and dominance is reproduced through structure of narratives and lexical choices too. The society is replete with persistent problems of oppression of women, injustice and inequality as women are continuously subjected to male dominance and unspeakable hostility, violence and sexual harassment (Enang, E and Urujzian, V. (2013a).

Textual Analysis

This paper is a discussion on the principles of critical discourse analysis such As dominance relations by the male groups and religious institutions and how stories are enacted, legitimated and produced to reflect preformed opinions. Some narratives do assign power to one group and limit the freedom of action of another group. The identity of the humiliated ones is dampened and this could affect their ideas of self. Managing the minds of others is essentially a function of a text (VanDilk, 2009) and (Enang, E and Urujzian,V. 2013b). Females had education late thus having passive access to communication events. Lack of power is also measured by lack of active or controlled access to discourse.

It is clear that the second creation story recorded in Genesis 2 vs. 2., has its separate characteristics and higher level organization that is not chronological and not in line with

natural arrangements. The second narration contradicts the first in many areas. Inconsistency in the order and method of creation and general female identity is prominent.

Whereas, the first creation story in Genesis one employs a repetitious structure of divine faith and fulfillment as represented by the statement, "And God said let there be.... And there was....” These activities are segregated according to days (1 -7) and in exact conventional form of a narration (Chronological and coherent); one stage leads to the other on a meaningful order. God created the land cultivated the garden, created fish and birds before creating man to enjoy the comfort and exercise dominion (control) over other creatures. The power to create and name belongs only to God.

The second creation narration is intentionally told in a broken formulaic formula and is incidentally, the most made popular creation story since it satisfies man's urge to dominate and amaze powers. This version is the most preferred in our pulpits. This therefore becomes the pivot of this study as it turns out to be an example of a narrative whose lexical choices, structure, etc. promote gender inequality and this situated meanings built about the world of the females, which affected the female's identity putting female pride is in jeopardy.

Conclusion

In the research, it is seen that each verse in the first creation story in Genesis I, is a group of lines starting with similar phrase "in the beginning" ...all about one important creation events or state at one time and place. The story is specific in terms of theme, image, topic and perspective. Once time, place, event or perspective changes, another verse begins. The connected speeches look like a set of boxes within boxes. Facts of equality which the narrator intends to put across clearly stated, "God created them male and female) Genesis1 vs 27. The female's identity boosted in first story is uncompromisingly destabilized by the second narration and has triggered the recent vigorous fight for gender equality across the globe."The status of women in society is very diverse worldwide. Among many important traits associated with differentiation of gender inequality is religion, which itself must be regarded as a fluid concept with interpretations and practices". This sources admit that the complexity of the issues and states that some religious norms and tradition can contribute to formation of gender inequalities and subordination of the female roles in the society.

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