



Book Review: Innovations and Challenges: Women, Language and Sexism

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This review evaluates Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard's 2020 book *Innovations and Challenges: Women, Language and Sexism*. The book provides a comprehensive overview of the complex relationships between women, language, and sexism. The authors explore linguistic challenges, gender inequality, and discrimination against women and the innovations that arise from those issues. One of the most notable developments in language studies in the 1970s and 1980s was the emergence of language and gender as an area of study (Coates & Pichler, 1998). Feminist works in the 1990s unquestionably influenced linguistic scholarship on the nature of gender identity and its social construction (Ehrlich, 2004). Using various methodologies, including critical applied discourse analysis, multimodality, and interactional sociolinguistics to critically analyze gendered discursive constructions of social practices in various public and private settings, the authors discuss both practical and theoretical aspects of issues related to women, language, and sexism.

The book is divided into two sections of several chapters each. The first section, "Language, discourse and gender violence" contains five chapters. In the first chapter, "Women, language and public discourse: Five decades of sexism and scrutiny," Alice Freed provides a historical overview of the last five decades of the linguistic feminist movement. She states that, despite the feminist movement's positive impact on women's lives, negative sexist commentary still endures in the twenty-first century United States. The chapter provides meaningful examples and a successful modification of the negative stereotypes of women that exist in the United States. Freed concludes that institutional sexism, unequal treatment of women, and biased representations of women remain common aspects of public discourse, and she encourages feminists to emphasize how deeply sexism is rooted in language still in use today.

In the second chapter, "The gender respect gap," Deborah Cameron investigates several linguistic practices that help to normalize male dominance and the extension of less respect to women than to men of similar social status, a phenomenon she terms "the gender respect gap" (P. 19). In her discussion, she presents both empirical research findings and observed experiences of banal sexism. She argues that socio- and applied linguists have conducted insufficient amounts of research on the forms of banal sexism that women are still discussing and writing about. Cameron concludes by underscoring

the need for further research on naturally occurring interactions across a large range of contexts and languages.

In the third chapter, "The transgressive, the traditional: Sexist discourses of grandmothering and ageing," Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Rosamund Moon propose that age, like gender, is related to political issues and sexism. They examine semiotic representations of older women through verbal and visual analyses. They examine semiotic representations of older women, a social category referred to as "grandmothers," through verbal and visual analyses (P. 35). Their discussion of corpus data provides examples of how older women are stereotyped. Society depicts older women as using the same semiotic resources as children, inhabiting domestic contexts, behaving transgressively, or performing behaviors "inappropriate" for their age. Caldas-Coulthard and Moon highlight the often naturalized processes of social devaluation in ageist and sexist representations of grandmothers. Older women are only gendered in the traditionally feminine context of family and home.

Despite the limited social semiotic research on the representation of toys, Jai Mackenzie, Laura Coffey-Glover, Sophie Payne, and Mark McGlashan examine the messages that children received when playing with LEGO minifigure cards and whether those messages perpetuate discriminatory norms and practices in the fourth chapter, "Disco divas and heroic knights: A critical multimodal analysis of gender roles in 'Create the World' LEGO cards." The authors demonstrate that LEGO minifigure cards reinforced gender boundaries and stereotypes. In their systematic analysis of the way minifigures are named, visually employed, and linguistically described on the cards. The authors conclude that overcoming discrimination and its underlying sexist ideologies requires analyzing children's toys.

Branca Telles Ribeiro and Liliana Cabral Bastos investigate the public debate over sexual harassment in the Brazilian press in the fifth chapter, "Sexual harassment as reported by the Brazilian press: Ambivalent and contradictory framings." They address the #MeToo movement using a frame analysis approach. They examine various sexist discursive practices' effects on the media discourse surrounding sexual harassment. They discuss how positions on sexism expressed in the digital world may vary according to gender, age, and professional status.

The second section, "Sexism and institutional discourses," contains four chapters. This section focuses on sexism at the institutional level. In chapter six, "Until I got a man in, he wouldn't listen," Janet Holmes investigates how women's roles in New Zealand workplaces are influenced by gendered norms. She draws from sociolinguistics research and provides a range of evidence for how gender order continues to affect workplace interactions. Using the database of the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP), Holmes analyzes how women in leadership positions negotiate these complex ideologies. Holmes's conclusion addresses a small change in overt sexism in the workplace and provides evidence of women fighting against gendered norms. She raises awareness of the gender order's continuing impact on workplace interactions.

In the seventh chapter, "Sexism and mediated recontextualisations: The case of a battered woman who killed," Sibley Slinkard and Susan Ehrlich focus on the discursive features of print media representations of a battered woman who was charged with murdering her abusive husband. The authors investigate the media coverage of women who kill their abusive partners and state that there is more public attention on women who kill than on stories about violent men who kill their abused partners or wives. Slinkard and Ehrlich examine an accused woman's police interview and demonstrate that media organizations ignored her claims to have acted in self-defense after living in a constant state of fear for herself and her son and instead portrayed her as a bad woman who planned the murder of her abusive husband.

Nicci MacLeod investigates police interviews of female rape victims in chapter eight, "The discourse of (re)exploitation: Female victims in the legal system." She uncovers the ways in which gender normative ideologies manifest through discursive practices by examining linguistic structures. MacLeod concludes with a significant observation of the victims' interpretations. She notes that female rape victims are often vulnerable and unfairly blamed for the crimes committed against them.

In the ninth chapter, "Language-based discrimination in schools: Intersections of gender and sexuality," Helen Sauntson investigates how language might influence how gender and sexual identities are constructed in school contexts. She explores the linguistic representations of sexism, homophobia, and heteronormativity in classroom interactions quoted in recent publications. She concludes that educators must think carefully and critically about how the language used in school settings can exclude certain groups and discourage thinking about diversity.

Caldas-Coulthard concludes that "*Women, Language and Sexism* as an area of Applied Linguistics, continues to be an important locus for the exposing of linguistic aspects of gender violence against women and structural inequalities" (P. xxiv).

This collection provides in-depth analysis of such issues as linguistic discrimination, gendered language use, and the impact of language on women's empowerment. The contributors take an intersectional approach by examining how gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and age. This approach allows for better understanding the experiences of different groups of women and language's role in shaping their identities. One of the book's key strengths is the contributors' extensive research across various disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, psychology, and feminist studies. The authors ground their claims in empirical evidence. More importantly, the book raises awareness of and explores linguistic innovations and its analyses are accessible to general readers as well as informative for experts.

One of the book's limitations is its focus on Western societies. Readers interested in languages with different gendered constructs and discourses may have to look elsewhere. The book also tends to oversimplify the relationship between language and sexism, and overlook other important factors such as socioeconomic status, race, and culture. Despite these criticisms, *Innovations and Challenges: Women, Language and Sexism* is an

important contribution to the field of language and gender. Further research is needed to raise awareness of gender issues in public and private sectors.

REFERENCES

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