The present paper analyses words and phrases in sexual discourse among university students in Kenya in order to determine men’s patriarchal language attitudes. Using Foucault’s (1978) Theory of Discourse Analysis and Feminist Theory, the study shows power interplay in male and female language use. Results revealed that males use powerful language which promotes patriarchal tendencies. This paper may help reduce exploitation and discrimination of women in society. It may also inform future studies on linguistic and gender issues.
The present paper analyses words and phrases male students of Moi University use to project patriarchy. It attempts to answer the following questions: What is patriarchy? How do university students portray patriarchal attitudes in their language use? Which words and phrases are used to portray university student’s patriarchal attitudes?

**Method**

Questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion Guide formed part of data collecting instruments. The study population was sampled purposefully from second year students of Moi University who were in session at the time of the research. Data was analyzed based on research objectives and theories outlined above. The results were organized thematically and presented in prose.

**Result and Discussion**

This paper analyzed 15 examples. A word or a phrase’s literal meaning is given followed by an in depth analysis of power reflected by the word or phrase.

**Team mafisi**

The above example exemplifies men’s appetite for women. *Fisi* is a Kiswahili word for hyena, an animal which is known for lust and greed in fairy tales. The term *team mafisi* therefore refers to a group of men who exhibit rowdy and reckless sexual behavior, for example, harassing women for sexual exploits. In this context, men are portrayed as powerful sex scavengers who do everything possible within their means to lay women. Women on the other hand are depicted as sex objects who are at the mercy of men.

**Kuingiza Box**

The example shows how men drive women into sexual relationships. *Kuingiza* is a Kiswahili word which refers to ‘take in someone or something’. So *kuingiza* box means taking someone (Woman) inside a box (Relationship/sex). The phrase shows power imbalance between men and women, men’s power deriving from their ability to approach women and initiate sex while women are rendered powerless and helpless as they are whisked into a box and locked in.

**Kumwaga mistari**

*Kumwaga mistari* literally translated from Kiswahili means ‘to pour lines’ which is in itself an ambiguous phrase. However, in the context of this study, the phrase means to seduce a lady or making a sexual advance. During seduction, a man ought to sound as convincing as possible. Some even go to the length of lying to win the heart of women who fall in their trap. This act is referred to as *kumwaga mistari*. It portrays the man as being courageous, clever or witty. The woman on the other hand is relegated and portrayed as being shy, timid and lacking courage to initiate a sexual relationship or sex, for that matter. This is a gender role that the society so constructed for men. It should be noted that sexual advance and initiation in most African communities is a preserve for men rather than women.

**Kugonga nyundo**

*Kugonga-nyundo* is a combination of two words- ‘kugonga’ and ‘nyundo’ which are both amorphous. The phrase has underlying deep sexual meaning. It refers to the act of a man ‘hammering’ (Fucking) a woman during sex. It is the penis which does the ‘hammering’ during sexual intercourse. Men in the African context are expected to display power even during sex by engaging a woman in very rigorous sex. Women are relegated because they do not have ‘hammers’. They are left on the receiving end yet sex is supposed to be a joint venture between a man and a woman.

**Campus Diva**

The above example is used to refer to campus ladies known for dressing in a trendy fashion particularly to impress males. Most have a figure 8 and their dressing ranges from tight, transparent cloths to miniskirts and tight trousers.

They may also improve their beauty by applying a lot of makeup. To be called a campus diva is relegating because, such women do everything possible to catch attention of men for sexual favors. It is relegating because it assumes that the only way a woman can earn livelihood through sexual exploitation.

**Sponsor**

Sponsor literally refers to a donor. However in the context of the study it refers to a wealthy man who is in a love relationship with a female university student. A sponsor should display the power of the pocket- foot bills, gives handouts, and preferably driving a posh car in order to accord the sponsored some status. University female students are known to host such men friends: for company, sex and for leisure. So this example clearly demonstrates economic power imbalance with men seemingly wielding a lot of power as women are subordinated to paupers, beggars and sex objects.

**Backup**

Backup is data or power saved as a reserve in new communication technology hardware. In the realm of sex, it is used to refer to a married man’s woman friend or a woman friend of one who has a fiancée. Referring to a woman friend as a backup is really relegating. It portrays the woman as a second rate citizen who enters in a relationship with very loose ties. In fact, such relationships are short-lived just like power in a backup power bank. Most African men can have one or more backups in their lifetime. Power imbalance is clearly demonstrated here in the sense that men have power to court many women on the one hand and on the other, women standout as sex objects for men.

**Laptop**

The word is used literally to refer to someone’s girlfriend who has a small gait and can be easily lifted or placed on laps. Similarly, it brings the connotation of a lady who is easily lured into sex. When we look at a laptop- a machine which operates on the basis of commands from the user in this context, then there are other sexual connotations that can be inferred. The small gait and weight of the girlfriend is comparable to the small size of a laptop. If a man is said to have a laptop then it means he has a small woman friend. In most societies in Africa, men are encouraged to marry plump women who are able to work and give birth to children. Small-sized women are believed to have birth problems and are likely to give birth to small children. For this reason, they are looked down upon.
Hotty

The word hotty is a derivative of the English word *hot* which refers to the aspect of something having high temperature. In the context of this study, it is used to refer to a woman with a great appetite for sex. Such a woman is considered to have loose morals.

The Kiswahili terms for hotty are *Malaya* or *kirukanjia* which sound very disgusting if used bluntly in conversation. Use of the term *hotty*, therefore, introduces an element of politeness which again tones down the power of the taboo words. However, considering that promiscuous women are deemed dirty by society, calling woman (married or not) *hotty* is insulting and amounts to contempt of the highest order. Ironically, men who have a great appetite for women are not treated with equal measure.

X

X is a modification of the English prefix {ex-} which denotes former. In the context of the study, the morpheme {ex-} which may be used with other morphemes for example ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend is substituted with x to conceal the relationship. Mention of x alone brings out the meaning of separation and does not require any further elaboration. The letter x is also a common letter which has been used variously to show condemnation, rejection or a defect of some sort. For example, it may be used to show a condemned building which has cracks and is dangerous for human habitation. In the context of a relationship, it may emphasize separation, hatred or lack of love between people who were once good friends. Use of X in the presence of a woman who has been rejected, arouses feelings of anger and must be avoided at all costs. In most African societies, a man rejecting a woman is extremely painful but ironically, a woman’s rejection of a man is non consequential. In fact, it is a source of pride to a man.

Migingo

Migingo is a name of an island in Lake Victoria with a few hills. The island has been at the centre of a controversy between Kenya and Uganda for some time. In the context of the study, the word refers to large protruding buttocks of some women. The word is commonly used in men talk when discussing a woman with large protruding and attractive buttocks that give her a sexy look. In many African societies, women with large buttocks of women are deemed beautiful (Ogechi, 2005). Note that it would be embarrassing to make direct reference to buttocks as they are considered sacred just like the female genitals. On the same note, the use of the word potrays women with large protruding buttocks as sex objects which is demeaning.

Conclusion

Words and phrases used by students of Moi University within the context of sex shows schewed power relations with men seemingly standing out as being powerful than women. The words and phrases reveal men’s lust for women parts of the body such as buttocks, their strength, sexual relationships and sexual urge. The examples analyzed demonstrate taboo avoiding tendencies in men’ use of language within the sexual discourse.

References


