



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol.3, Issue, 4, pp.165-171, April, 2011

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE IN GHANA

Godwin Ramous Kwame Egbenya

Department of Sociology and Anthropology University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 12th January, 2011
Received in revised form
29th February, 2011
Accepted 21st March, 2011
Published online 17th April, 2011

Key word:

Gender neutrality,
Gender inequality,
Inclusive generic terms
Exclusive generic terms,
Language,

ABSTRACT

This study looks at the issue of “Gender and the politics of language in Ghana” It examines the extent to which the use of language depicts the “inferiority” of female and the “superiority” of the males in the country. In other words, the study intends finding out whether language is used to promote gender neutrality or encourage gender bias in the Ghanaian society. The study was conducted through a content analysis of some columns in the popular Ghanaian Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Chronicle newspapers over a period of three months. The analysis was specifically based on the issue of how language is used to relegate women to the background in the form of the usage of gender biased generic terms in the Ghanaian print media. It was found out that within the Ghanaian print media, gender neutral or inclusive generic terms were used to a very large extent as compared to the usage of gender bias or exclusive generic terms indicating a lower trend in the use of gender bias language in the country. If the suggested measures by this study such as giving equal chance to both sexes in terms of words, pictures or illustrations in the writing of textbooks or readers are carried out it would go a long way to create more gender neutrality in language usage which will help us develop.

© Copy Right, IJCR, 2011 Academic Journals. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Language is the foundation of every culture as most people invariably depend on language for the transmission of most of a society’s culture. Language, apart from describing reality, also serves to shape our culture because our norms, values and sanctions are communicated to people through language (Schaefer, 1968). Language is also a medium of socialization. That is, a process by which the values and norms including those relating to the different sexes are taught and learnt. Teaching and learning of language is a life long process. As the child learns a language, he or she also learns how to think and behave as a member of the culture of the place where the particular language is used (Renzetti & Curran, 1995). Gender as a concept refers to social, psychological and cultural attributes of masculinity and femininity that are based on biological and social distinctions. An illustration of gender differentiation is that, in every society, men are thought to be independent, aggressive, competitive, rational and physically strong while women are thought to be passive, nurturant, co-operative, emotional and physically weak (Rothenberg, 1992). Most of the languages used in our Ghanaian society tend to depict the inferiority of females and putting the female behind the men. These languages are continuously used in our everyday lives which promote male superiority. For instance, whenever we hear the term ‘chairperson’ listeners tend to perceive a male. This is because male dominance has existed for a long period of time. Most often too, whenever writers

want to use the pronoun ‘he’ or ‘she’, they usually bring ‘he’ first before ‘she’, which depicts women to be the second in everything. Instead, the ‘she’ can also be used first before the ‘he’. So the intention of this study is to find out whether the English language is used to promote gender neutrality or encourage gender bias in the Ghanaian society. In other words the study explores the ways in which male privilege is promoted in Ghanaian society through language.

Objective of the Study

The study examines the extent to which the use of language depicts the “inferiority” of female and the “superiority” of the males in the country. In other words, the study intends finding out whether inclusive terms such as “people” or “chairperson” are being used to promote gender neutrality or the use of sex exclusive words such as “man” or “he” are being used to encourage gender bias in the Ghanaian society using articles and speeches in the “Ghanaian Daily Graphic” and “Ghanaian Chronicle” newspapers. The “Ghanaian Daily Graphic” and “Ghanaian Chronicle” newspapers are public and private owned newspapers respectively. These newspapers are being used because they are the main source of information about local and foreign affairs in the country. They give not only more detailed information about a particular incident but they also contain more new items. Besides, newspapers are easier to carry and they could be read at any time during the day.

Premises

It would be necessary to work on the assumption that every society has gender inequality to some extent. Many factors

*Corresponding author: godwinegbenya2000@yahoo.com

contribute to this inequality, prominent among them is language. The word "man" is used for humanity generally but it is also used to refer to the male. 'She' is used to describe female occupations, which are low in prestige and wages, e.g. teaching and nursing. 'He' is used for male occupations like doctors and engineers. The styles of speaking reflect position in society. Women are expected in most societies to use less direct language and less forceful speech. Men on the other hand are more likely to initiate conversation and audience would pay more attention to a man's speech (Renzetti and Curran, 1995). The structure of the English Language reinforces the subject-object relationship through the symbolic exclusion of women, where they should be included and in the unnecessary proliferation of terms, often derogatory for use in referring to females. Among the aspects of English usage that include women are the reliance on male generic nominal pronouns and to refer to groups of mixed or unknown sex, example, "man" or "mankind" to mean the human race or an individual of unknown sex, e.g. "the dentist ---- he". That these grammatical customs have the effect of largely excluding women from consciousness is made clear by recent studies of the subjective meaning attributed to such generic terms: to its users, for example, "man" is almost exclusively a word used to talk about males. "People" is more likely than "man" to include women, but to guarantee that females are represented one must be explicit and say "men and women" (Purnell, 1982). One abnormality in the rules giving males pre-eminence in English reveals something of the stereotypical sex breakdown of employment; "he" is the generic pronoun for all individuals of unknown sex except for a handful of special groups, those engaged in work associated with women, such as nurses, elementary school teachers, and secretaries. So one might "correctly" say "the dentist he" but "the receptionist she" without knowing the sex of either (Miller and Swift, 1989). It can therefore be inferred from the discussion so far that there is gender inequality in the use of the English Language in societies like Ghana. The question one asks at this point is that what literature can be used to explain the situation that societies particularly the Ghanaian society exhibit some amount of gender construction.

Gender and sex

The term "gender" differs from and closely related term "sex". "Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women while "Gender" is the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Some examples of sex characteristics are that women menstruate while men do not; men have testicles while women do not and women have developed breasts that are usually capable of lactating, while men have not. On the other hand examples of gender characteristics are that in the many countries women earn significantly less money than men for similar work, in Viet Nam, many more men than women smoke, as female smoking has not traditionally been considered appropriate and in Saudi Arabia men are allowed to drive cars while women are not allowed (World Health Organization-WHO, 2010).

Social construction of Gender

Gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life. Gender, like culture, is a human production that

depends on everyone constantly "doing gender". For example a man with a baby on his chest, men taking care of small children in the hospital and men who are changing the role of fathers are all doing gender (Lorber, 2010). Gender is considered as a product of socialization subject to human agency, organization, and interpretation. In its significance and consequences it is an institution which is comparable to the economy, the family, and religion institutions. It has been established that in most of our culture images of women are the way men see them and not the way women see themselves and in modern society, women are expected to have children and be the primary caretaker and domestic work is almost always the sole responsibility of wives, even when the women earn more than half the family income, few women are in positions of authority, when women can be found in substantial numbers in many occupations and profession. So many processes constitute the social construction of gender. For example parenting is gendered, with different expectations for mothers and people of different genders work at different kinds of jobs. Gender as a social institution creates distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities. Lorber (2010) argues that the whole point of the gender system today is to maintain structured gender inequality, to produce a subordinate class (women) that can be exploited as workers, sexual partners, child bearers, and emotional *nurturers*. It must be noted that gendered roles are changing. Today fathers are taking care of little children, girls and boys are wearing unisex clothing and getting the same education, women and men are working at the same jobs.

Language as an expression of gender as a social construct

Languages use us as much as we use language. The personal identity of women in language usage is linguistically submerged; the language works against treatment of women, as serious persons with individual views. Speech about women is analyzed with regard to lady: woman, master: mistress, widow: widower, and Mrs: Miss, with notice of differential use of role terms not explicitly marked for sex (e.g. professional) as well. As much as our choice of forms of expression is guided by the thoughts we want to express, to the same extent the way we feel about the things in the real world governs the way we express ourselves about these things. Two words can be synonymous in their denotative sense, but one will be used in case a speaker feels favorably toward the object the word denotes, the other if he is unfavorably disposed. (Lakoff, 1973).

In addition to being an instrument for articulating and reflecting the various gender orders and resultant categories, language also constructs and maintains these categories. A gender order is constructed and maintained as illustrated by the following labels. Mrs, Miss that have been conventionally used to refer to different categories of a woman. Ms. is however a recent label that is shared by both Miss & Mrs. The justification of Mrs, Miss, Ms are not only semantic but are also couched with heavy gender connotations from the dimension of feminist perspective. Often the sequential order is Mr & Mrs but not Mrs & Mr. This too does not only carry semantic and gender connotation but it is an illustration of power and dominance on one hand and subjugation and humility on the other (Shitemi, 2009). Language is also the key instrument and medium by which gender ideologies are

constructed, perpetuated and propagated. Gender ideologies differ with respect to nature of male and female; justice, naturalness, origins and necessities of various aspects of the gender order; on whether difference is fundamental, whether it should be maintained and whether it can-or should-be maintained without inequality” (Shitemi, 2009). Convention and gender assumptions include such fallacies as those that drive various gender ideologies in given societies. Some of these fallacies include stereotypes such as: men are strong while women are weak, men are brave while women are timid, men are aggressive while women are passive, men are sex driven while women are relationship driven, men are rational while women are irrational, men are direct while women are indirect, men are competitive while women are cooperative, men are practical while women are nurturing, men are rough while women are gentle, men don't cry Some grammar morphemes have gender as part of their content. Language also requires gender morphology even where the grammar morphemes appear to be gender neutral. Such linguistic structures coerce speakers to point to/ index the gender of people involved in utterances. Often, the noun and verb morphology will have explicit gender content. (Shitemi, 2009).

Notions of gender constructs in the Ghanaian Society.

Every society establishes a set of accepted behaviours to which males and females are expected to conform. Men are believed to be more intelligent than women. Women are thought particularly to be incapable of foresight and lack the ability to make and carry through sensible and realistic plans. For this reason, it is generally agreed that husbands should administer the family estate and wives for the most part concur with husbands' plans. It is commonly claimed that if a woman tried to manage property, she would very likely make a mess of it. Akan proverb entrenches this idea when it says, “when a woman buys a gun, it is kept in a man's room.” This proverb shows that women do not have the capacity and ability to manage valuable property, an indication that they must play insignificant and subordinate roles to men with regards to property ownership (Dogbevi, 2007).

As a result, it is common to find in most African societies such as the Ghanaian society, where a wife owns a house or a car, but it is held in trust by the husband and or a son, and she would not openly claim ownership of the property. A woman, who does so, would be seen as disgracing her husband. And the only time the truth comes out, is when the marriage runs into difficulties and the issue of divorce comes up. Women own property but the documents on those property are in the men's names. Women therefore, are unable to access credit with these documents, further worsening their chances of economic freedom. Another Akan proverb says, “the man is the woman's honour”. Therefore, if a woman marries a man who is poor and owns no property and she on the other hand, is materially endowed, she would have to pretend that all the wealth belongs to her husband. Because it is the only way, the man could become her symbol of honour. As a result of these strongly held beliefs, some men are known to have forcefully claimed property belonging to their wives in the event of a misunderstanding in the marriage or divorce. This situation of property ownership according to gender, which is perpetrated through proverbs, has become the basis for gender roles in society. The roles and responsibilities, constraints,

opportunities and the needs of men and women in African societies have largely been defined and established through the oral traditions. The ways women are objectified differ from one culture to the other, but there is one type which is widespread in Africa. In Africa, women have for a long time been used as a conduit through which men formed and solidified their relation with other men. Families enhance their wealth and alliance by giving away their female children in marriage, often against the wish of the daughters. Unfortunately, this idea of women as objects that male members of the society can use to acquire status and wealth has been largely used in advertising.

Indeed, female sexuality is used to sell almost everything including body sprays for men. For instance, there is an advertisement for a male body spray called 'Men Only' running in the Ghanaian media. The billboard for this product for men has a five foot image of a woman sitting in a suggestive position. And the TV advert for this same product depicts women as weak, unintelligent and objects of men's ridicule and mirth. In this advert, three women traveling in a car had one of their tires punctured by an object. These women got down from the car took out wheel spanners, but were confused and did not have a clue as to what to do about the problem. And across the street stood a muscular man who was laughing loudly over the women's stupidity, and then a voice over booms, “for men only.” The concept of women as marketing objects is so pervasive that, it has become near to impossible to market a product successfully without using the image of women. Ironically, though, a woman, in spite of her perceived 'weakness', is supposed to be very hardworking. Her role as a farm-hand is crucial in the sustenance of the husband and the family. A woman is somewhat an economic asset and farm manual chores are part of her existence. As a result, there are proverbs that shower praises on the hardworking woman and emits fiery scorn against the lazy one. It should, however, be understood that the images of the woman in the above proverbs do not necessarily relate to what she is but rather what ought to be. It is basically a matter of the way she is 'seen' and 'wanted' and not the way she is. This is an illustration of culturally imposed and enhanced stereotypes that, ultimately, aim at conditioning the woman's perception both by her self and others (Dogbevi, 2007). In Britwum's study (1993) on the 'Impact of Women and Development Projects on the status of rural women within their families' the respondents stated that the qualities of an ideal man or women were men who owned property and could provide income sources and shelter for their wives and children. For women, being a good mother or wife who ensured that her children and husband were well-fed and clothed. Maleness was therefore constructed around property acquisition. A successful man is one who is able to acquire property – either a house or capital fishing equipment. All fishermen aspire to this position. Femaleness, however, is constructed around autonomy and subjugation underlying reproductive and conjugal roles and entrepreneurial skills.

It is important at this point to mention that the patriarchal nature of the African society, just like most societies of the world created these disadvantaged conditions of women. The changes in our society have affected the meanings of some proverbs with regard to the role of women in some African societies. These days, women in some African societies, who hitherto, have no right to own property, and assume leadership

roles, have now taken up to such roles with ease and immense success. The challenges confronting African thought and concepts of gender in recent times will gradually bring about a shift in the ideology and give women their rightful place in the society. This ultimately is expected to result in gender equality that is equality between women and men. Equality between women and men is seen as a precondition for and indicator of sustainable people centered development (World Bank Institute, 2008).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To provide support for the documentary exposition made in line with the objective of the study, a content analysis of some columns (the editorials, features, politics and business) of the most popular daily Ghanaian newspapers, the Daily Graphic and the Chronicle. It was undertaken for the three months, October – December 2008 to find out whether Ghanaians use inclusive terms (to designate both men and women) or gender neutral language. The choice of the months, October-December 2008 was because during that period, the Ghanaian society was more active in preparation for the Christmas festivities and the 2008 general elections and these conditions might have given rise to more comments by people in the papers. The information in the papers represent to a very large extent the use of language in the intra and the inter-personal relationships within the families, public places, the churches, the academia and the Ghanaian community as a whole. In this study the concept of inclusive terms (both men and women) or gender neutral language involves the use of words, which indicate no male or female differentiation and could be for a man or woman e.g. Chairperson or police officer. On the other hand, gender inequality language involves the use of words which portray the meanness of women and the superiority of men e.g. policeman, spokesman.

Empirical evidence from the Ghanaian print media.

The Tables 1 and 2 portray the data on the occurrences of the generic terms in the “Ghanaian Daily Graphic Newspaper” and the “Ghanaian Chronicle Newspaper” of October to December 2008.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After a critical review of the selected columns (features, editorials, politics and business) in the Ghanaian Daily Graphic Newspaper and the Ghanaian Chronicle, the following outcomes were revealed. In the features column, all sex inclusive generic terms were used on the following number of times: person (167 times), people (376 times), chairperson (42 times), humankind (48 times) and human being (195 times) as indicated in Table 1. In Table 2, the features column revealed person (88 times), people (225 times), chairperson (19 times), humankind (9 times), and human being (65 times). Exclusive generic terms were also used on the following occasions or number of times; man (29 times), mankind (0 times), chairman (57 times), businessman (2), he (10 times), him/his (17 times) in Table 1 and man (25 times), mankind (1 time), Chairman (34 times), Businessman (10 times), he (6 times) and him/his (1 time) in Table 2. It can therefore be said that within the three (3 months) period, the features column had more usage of the sex/gender neutral generic terms as compared to

the ‘male only’ language terms with respect to the two print media in question. A look at the data in Table 1 shows that in the editorial column, the inclusive generic terms were used in the following counts. ‘Person’ had a total usage of (97 times), people (126 times), chairperson (39 times), humankind (8 times), and human being (46 times). On the contrary the record for exclusive terms indicated the following: man (22 times), mankind (3 times), chairman (29 times), he (3 times) and him/his (3 times) in Table 1 and in Table 2 the following were revealed: ‘Person’ had a total usage of (109 times), people (200 times), chairperson (30 times), humankind (26 times), and human being (28 times). On the contrary the record for exclusive terms indicated the following: man (24 times), mankind (0 times), chairman (23 times), Businessman (3 times), he (2 times) and him/his (2 times). A comparison of the number of times and rate of usage of both the inclusive terms and rate of usage of both the inclusive and exclusive generic terms indicate a widespread usage of gender neutral terms as compared to the gender biased terms. This is evident from the total number of times these terms were used in the Editorials.

In the ‘politics’ column, the same result as that of the others was found. The inclusive terms were used for the following number of times: person (112 times), people (510 times), chairperson (149 times), humankind (14 times) and human being (97 times) while exclusive terms had the following outcomes, man (12 times), mankind (18 times), chairman (43 times), businessman (6 times), he (3 times) and him/his (1 times) in Table 1 and person (81 times), people (197 times), chairperson (40 times), humankind (17 times) and human being (38 times) while exclusive terms had the following outcomes, man (20 times), mankind (0 times), chairman (14 times), businessman (0 times), he (8 times) and him/his (3 times) in Table 2. It could also be seen here that the inclusive terms were used more profoundly than the exclusive terms were used, which is depicted by their total number of times of usage. The ‘business’ column also had its share of the usage of the terms. With regard to the inclusive terms the total usage for the three (3) month period was: person (38 times), people (66 times), chairperson (18 times), humankind (0 times) and human being (11 times). The exclusive terms had a record of chairman (2 times) and businessman (25 times), other exclusive terms like he, she/her, him/his, Miss, Mrs. and Mr. were not used in this column to depict gender biasness in Table 1. In Table 2: person (89 times), people (184 times), chairperson (42 times), humankind (2 times) and human being (1 time). The exclusive terms had a record of man (15 times), mankind (0 times), chairman (12 times) and businessman (13 times), other exclusive terms like he (10 times), and him/his (1times). The summation of the generic terms in all the contents of the papers revealed the following: person (414 times), people (1069 times), chairperson (248 times), Humankind (70 times), and Human being (349 times) as the inclusive terms used and the total of the exclusive terms revealed the following: man (63 times), mankind (21 times), chairman (121 times), businessman (36 times), he (22 times) and him/his (24 times) in Table 1. The following totals were revealed: person (367 times), people (806 times), chairperson (131 times), Humankind (52 times), and Human being (131 times) as the inclusive terms used and the total of the exclusive terms revealed the following: man (84 times), mankind (1 time), chairman (83 times), businessman (26 times), he (26 times) and him/his (7 times) in Table 2. Therefore, it can be

Table 1. Utilization of Generic terms (occurrences) in some columns of the Ghanaian Daily Graphic

GENERIC TERMS	NEWSPAPER COLUMN & MONTHS												TOTAL
	Features			Editorial			Politics			Business			
	Months			Months			Months			Months			
Inclusive Terms	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
Person	66	52	49	39	17	41	29	44	39	23	6	9	414
People	141	112	123	27	47	52	173	162	176	26	17	13	1069
Chairperson	6	27	9	11	9	19	69	61	19	11	4	3	248
Humankind	11	37	-	-	2	6	3	9	2	-	-	-	70
Human being	52	69	74	6	16	24	33	21	43	7	3	1	349
Exclusive Terms A	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
“Man”	4	6	19	7	6	9	5	-	7	-	-	-	63
“Mankind”	-	-	-	1	-	2	11	7	-	-	-	-	21
Chairman	41	2	14	2	6	11	3	16	24	1	-	1	121
Businessman	1	-	1	-	2	1	-	1	5	6	8	11	36
Exclusive Terms B	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
He	1	6	3	5	1	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	22
She/Her	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Him/His	1	7	9	3	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	24
Miss	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mrs.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mr.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: “Ghanaian Daily Graphic Newspaper” (October- December 2008)

Table 2. Utilization of some Generic terms (occurrences) in some columns of the Ghanaian Chronicle News Paper

GENERIC TERMS	NEWSPAPER COLUMN & MONTHS												TOTAL
	Features			Editorial			Politics			Business			
	Months			Months			Months			Months			
Inclusive Terms	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
Person	34	21	33	24	46	39	27	23	31	27	24	38	367
People	72	69	84	68	78	54	71	70	56	61	54	69	806
Chairperson	6	4	9	3	11	16	10	19	11	14	17	11	131
Humankind	5	3	1	9	6	9	9	2	6	2	-	-	52
Human being	24	15	26	17	3	8	17	9	12	-	-	1	131
Exclusive Terms A	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
“Man”	6	8	11	4	9	11	6	7	9	4	2	84	
“Mankind”	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Chairman	16	7	11	14	7	2	2	9	3	6	3	3	83
Businessman	6	3	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	3	4	6	26
Exclusive Terms B	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
He	2	1	3	-	1	1	2	-	6	1	3	6	26
She/Her	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Him/His	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	-	1	-	7
Miss	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mrs.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mr.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: “The Chronicle Newspaper” (October-December2008)

inferred from the analysis done that inclusive generic terms were used more than the exclusive generic terms in the newspapers used for the work. The next section of the paper deals with some illustrations of the use of gender inclusive and exclusive terms in the Daily Graphic Newspaper and the Ghanaian Chronicle News Paper for the period under study.

Some Illustrations of the use of gender inclusive and exclusive terms from the study

In examining the formal articles and speeches in the selected columns of the “Daily Graphic” Newspaper and the Ghanaian Chronicle Newspaper, it was found that in some instances, some generic terms that depict ‘male-only’ language were used

in some of the articles and speeches. Specific terms for males were used on some occasions to represent both sexes. The terms ‘man’, ‘mankind’, ‘businessman’, and ‘chairman’ in some instances were used to denote members of both sexes (males and females). Exclusive terms such as he, she/her, him/his, Miss, Mrs., and Mr. were used in almost all cases of the columns reviewed, to specifically delineate males from females. The title ‘Ms’ was used in most cases to refer to single or unmarried women. He, she/her, Mr. and him/his also referred to male and females when the need be. However, there were instances where the term ‘man’ was used specifically to embrace both sexes, ‘he’ was used to denote the pronoun aspect. This finding is not so different from Purnell’s (1982) work conducted in the United States of America where she concluded that whenever a job or occupation is referred to

using a sex-specific pronoun, that pronoun is a masculine. The use of 'he' and 'man' for both sexes consequently only visualize men alone leaving out the women. From the above discussion, it could be noted that the usage of these terms to represent both sexes depicts some form of gender inequality language in the Ghanaian print media. This could be buttressed with some text from the literature that our everyday speech reflects the "superiority" of the male and "inferiority" of the female resulting in master-subject relationship. The words associated with men have very different connotations while those of women are negative or demeaning. The male words connote power, authority or a positively valued status (Purnell, 1982). However, inclusive generic terms such as person, people, chairperson, humankind and human being were used to a very large extent in both newspapers reviewed. A word like 'people' was used in almost all instances to refer to the entire citizenry as well as person, humankind and human being. The word 'chairperson' was also used to define positions of individuals that could be filled by a male or female occupant. It should also be emphasized that though 'chairperson' was used, it was only in the instance where the occupant of the position is a female but if the occupant is a male, the word 'chairman' was most often used.

Conclusion

It could be seen that gender inequality in a society is multi-dimensional. It manifests itself in so many forms and areas such as wife– battery, spousal rape, low incomes at places of work in the case of females and the issue of language usage. This study sought to examine the issue of "Gender and the politics of language in Ghana" concentrating specifically on articles and speeches in the "Daily Graphic" newspaper and the "Ghanaian Chronicle" newspaper. The issue of language that widely and specifically depicts the 'inferiority' of females and 'superiority' of males seem to be decreasing as it was realized from the content analysis of the newspapers that though male-only language was used on some occasions, their extent and wide usage at least in the columns were minimal as compared to the gender neutral generic terms as evident in the literature that times are changing and women are getting their right places in society by way of new trends of gender construction.

That notwithstanding, it cannot be said or generalized that since in the print media, the usage of 'male only' terms, gender inequality has reduced drastically in the country. One should not lose sight of the fact that most of these articles and stories are edited before being made available to the public. Therefore, what is the way forward?

The way forward

From the data analysis, literature review and the illustrations made above it is clear that a social change is needed in order to eliminate gender inequality in society especially with reference to language. The big question is how can it be done? The need to eradicate the language of sexism, to bring about equality of the sexes has been recognized by a variety of writers such as Miller, C. & Swift, K. (1989). So, it is imperative that we eliminate gender inequality as a form of social change by introducing measures, which involve significant alternation over time in behaviour patterns and culture including norms and values or put in another way, it would be in the form of

changes in attitude and approach. Some suggestions as to how to bring about the change are made in the next section.

Suggested measures for gender-neutral language usage.

Social change is necessary and needed in order to eliminate gender inequality in society especially with reference to language. A few suggestions which when properly effected can bring about change for more gender neutrality in language in our society are stated as follows:

- Intensifying the substitution of the title Ms. for Miss and Mrs. just as we have Mr. for all types of men. Ms is analogous to Mr.
- By alternating the order of feminine and masculine nouns and pronouns eg. he/ she; man/woman instead of using he, one may always use he/she or he and she or simply they as a single pronoun.
- Continue neutralizing the generic man to be police officer, rather than policeman, spokesperson instead of spokesman, chairperson instead of chairman etc.
- In the writing of textbooks or readers, conscious attempt should be made to give dual chance to both sexes in terms of words, pictures or illustrations.
- Seminar workshops or film shows should be organized for communities on the use of words in our language, which favour gender neutrality, or as a form of conscientising the people.
- Policy formulators and implementers on languages should consider the issue of giving women equal opportunities as to the use of the language.
- The use of a man as a verb in our everyday expression should be avoided. E.g. 'the woman will man the industry' it should be 'the woman will run the industry'.
- It is high time we started describing women's actions to imply that they are equally rational and emotional like men. We should not trivialize things by wording when women assert themselves.
- Women themselves should also avoid making passive comments about themselves like 'I lost my job' instead "they fired me" or 'I was raped' instead of 'he raped me' which always points to the woman as the victim and
- There should be more representation of women on executive committees in order for them to influence policy formulation and implementation and monitoring towards gender neutrality in language usage.

If these measures are adopted and used by us as individuals and groups it would go a long way to create gender neutrality in language usage. This would also help us to develop, as language is an important factor that brings about socialization and development. We should recognize the fact that there would be some form of resistance to the implementation of these suggested measures as this is a variation in social interaction, norms, and values. But with time the changes would become accepted norms as we use the suggestions. This situation of creating equal opportunities for the use of language would let the women open up and contribute their quota to the development i.e. the well being of the Ghanaian society.

REFERENCES

- Britwum, A. O. 1993. The impact of women and development projects on the status of rural women within their families. Unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, University.
- Curran, D. J. and Renzenti, C.M. 1995. Women, men and society. New York: Allyn and Bacon Ltd.
- Dogbevi, E.K. 2007. Gender construction in African proverbs-an analysis). Ghanaian daily graphic newspaper (October-December 2008).
- Kourany, J.A., Sterba, J.P. and Tong, R. 1992. Feminist philosophies. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Lakoff, R.1973. Language and woman's place". Language in Society, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Apr., 1973), pp. 45-80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lorber, J. 2010. Paradoxes of Gender. Yale: Yale University, Press.
- Miller, C. and Swift, K. 1989. The handbook of non-sexist writing London: The Women's Press Ltd.
- Purnell, S. 1982. Politically speaking, Do women exist in the journal of communication. Los Angelis.
- Ritzer, G. 1995. Modern sociological theory. New York: McGraw – Hill Companies.
- Rothenberg, S.P. 1992. Race class and gender in U.S.A. New York: Martin's Press.
- Schaeffer, R.T. 1986. Sociology, New York: Mc.Graw – Hill Book Company.
- Shitemi, N.L. 2009. Language and gender. Moi: Moi University Campuses, The Chronicle Newspaper (October-December 2008).
- World Bank Institute,. 2008. Parliamentary oversight of gender equality Handbook. Washington: Parliamentary Centre.
- World Health Organization-WHO, 2010. Gender, women and health. [http://www.whoimc/gender/gender/what is gender /en /index.html](http://www.whoimc/gender/gender/what_is_gender/en/index.html). Retrieved on 10/08/2010.
