

SEXIST LANGUAGE IN THE NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA – A STUDY OF *THE PUNCH* AND *THE GUARDIAN* NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

This research was informed by the Whorfian view that language exerts a great influence on worldview and attitudes. The work was based on Claude Shannon's Communication Theory. The study examined the forms, shades and manifestations of sexist language in two popular Nigerian newspapers. It established that sexism in language is a bias, not only against women, but also against men. Expressions like, men of the underworld, gunmen, mastermind (violence) for which there are no female equivalents in the language lend credence to this assertion. A total of 206 articles, cutting across editorials, opinion pages, news reports, interviews and political columns were critically reviewed. The data used in this research work were collected from the articles covered in the two leading Nigerian newspapers. This was done through a thorough examination of the data. The example words from the newspapers were first isolated and then analyzed against the background of the type of sexist language they represented. Statistical tables and charts were used, where relevant to represent the data. The study revealed that 'generic masculine words' were the most commonly used sexist form in Nigerian newspapers.

Keywords: Claude Shannon, gender neutrality, language and gender, sexism, Whorf

1.0 Introduction

Humans are endowed with the gift of showing respect for the feelings of others. Language is one of the most powerful tools which can be used to establish relationships or solidarity, even as it can also be used to tear down and sever long-term relationships. It is therefore the duty of a linguist to champion the phatic function of language.

Though change has been described as the only permanent thing in life, humans have opposed change more vehemently than any other human establishment or endowment. Languages, generally, more than any resources of mankind, have undergone tremendous changes. The English language which is the focus of this paper has undergone changes; syntactic, phonological, morphological and semantic. As a dynamic system, language is also subject to change. Avoiding sexist language, no doubt, will make us more skilful writers, and speakers, while also being *sensitive to the feelings of others*. This is important because sexist language is being increasingly regarded as a deviation from acceptable norm in writing. For example, in 1975, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in the US approved a set of guidelines for nonsexist use of language in the Council's publications (Nilsen, Bosinajian, Gershuny & Stanley 1977). In December 1997, the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) published a set of guidelines for nonsexist language

practices to be adopted when preparing oral and written presentations in linguistics. The increasingly acceptability of gender-neutral language is further buttressed by the fact that The American Psychological Association (APA) recently published a handbook containing guidelines on how to avoid sexist language. These changes are however novel to most writers and Nigerian speakers of the English language, as those adopting the norm are popularly seen as bad speakers or 'murderers' of the language. Some enlightened speakers are therefore, left between 'the devil of using sexist language and becoming accepted, and the deep blue sea of using gender-neutral language and being considered incompetent in the language'. This problem is further compounded as a result of the fact that most of those considered as arbiters of the language like linguists, English language teachers, broadcasters, writers and journalists also use sexist language, either deliberately or unintentionally. According to Nair, (2003:1) 'We are constantly bombarded by gender-biased images in the media and give little thought to the way women and men are represented'. This, according to the writer, *contributes to the way in which we see our roles in society*.

As reported by Holmes (2008), there is evidence that in countries such as the United States, Britain and New Zealand, newspapers, magazines, journals and

books are increasingly aware of attitudes to the use of the generic *he* and *man*, as in;

Man is a political animal

and writers use varieties of strategies to avoid the terms. The same can, however, not be said of writers, journalists, broadcasters, etc in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, examines the use of sexist language by news editors, reporters, journalists, columnists, political analysts, etc, in two popular Nigerian newspapers (The Guardian and The Punch newspapers), with a view to looking at the recurrent sexist language patterns and proffering alternatives to sexist expressions. The choice of the media and specifically, the print media is informed by the fact that the media are an invaluable tool in shaping, aggregating and influencing popular opinion. A success in getting rid of sexist language in the media will be a great one in doing so in the Nigerian community at large.

2.0 Background

One of the latest attempts at redefining and restructuring language is that of 'desexing' language. It is an effort targeted at making language gender neutral or gender inclusive. Almost all languages (though to a varying degree) are guilty of gender bias, with the English language coming tops among the languages which could be described as *the most accomplished practitioners of all the vices of the school of sexism in language*. Such bias has succeeded in creating stereotypes of both male and female genders. Contrary to what readily comes to mind each time the issue of sexist language is mentioned, the English language is also biased against the male gender, hence the need and advocacy for gender-neutral equivalent of stereotypes. The expressions *gunmen*, *men of the underworld* are just two of such bias against men. Even when the evil associated with such expressions is perpetrated by women, the perpetrators would still be referred to not as *women of the underworld* or *gunwomen* but *men of the underworld* or *gunmen*, as the former would sound odd and unconventional.

Since language has a great deal of influence on the way we think and view the world, such expressions imprint on our mind that only men are criminals, even when some women could be more dastardly. Another example which could also be cited to buttress the fact that no gender benefits from sexist language is the word, *mastermind*, which though etymologically and semantically does not always connote something negative, is used more often in referring to crime, criminal activities and other forms of antisocial behavior. Again, this word is usually associated with the male, probably owing to its root, *master*. The examples above were cited not to counteract the argument by feminists but to show that sexist language does not favor any gender. It is an evil wind that blows no one good. This is why this research aims at looking at the use of sexist language in two popular Nigerian dailies with a view to

sensitizing writers and the reading public on the need to avoid gender bias in language.

3.0 Review of related literature

Graddol and Swann (1989: 96) define *sexism* as any discrimination against women or men because of their sex, and made on irrelevant grounds. Similarly, Cameron (1985: 72) defines *sexist language* as 'language that contains a lexicon and a grammatical structure that excludes, insults or trivializes women'. Based on this, we can define sexist language as any use of language which tends to establish a particular gender as the norm, the visible or "the only," while obliterating the other or considering it as inconsequential or unnecessarily drawing attention to it. The English language has been accused of being sexist. The language is replete with gender discrimination and bias. The English word order, more often, places the masculine gender first, as in the following examples; *man and woman, husband and wife, male and female, he or she, him or her, Adam and Eve, brothers and sisters* etc. This word order has become so entrenched in the language that a departure or a descent from it sounds weird or abnormal. Consider the effect that is likely to be created in the mind of most hearers when they hear expressions like; God created us *female and male*, I pronounce you *wife and husband*, we can choose *her or him*, etc. The only few exceptions are found in expressions such as; *bride and groom* and *ladies and gentlemen*, where the female is given precedence in word order, and a departure would still be considered acceptable, for example, *gentlemen and ladies*, would sound just as normal as *ladies and gentlemen*. The sexist nature of the English language is also evident in English pronoun reference, which is often taken to include the female gender, like the use of *he* and its variants, in such instances as;

Everyone should come to class with his

Sociolinguistics textbook.

Each student should have his fee

ready.

Every good citizen should love his country more than himself; he should be ready to die for it if the need arises. (Yusuf, 2002)

Some nouns are used generically to preclude and include the feminine gender, e.g. *man, mankind, fireman, policeman, chairman, forefather, manhood, common man* etc. Many researches (Gomard 1995, Romaine 1999, and Yusuf 2002) have identified that sexism in language comes in three major forms: language ignores women, it defines them as less significant than men, and it obviously deprecates the female. The first argument is validated by the use of the generic form to cover male and female, while the second is seen in English word order. These first two arguments have been exemplified above.

The third argument (that of obviously deprecating women), is seen in expressions where women are given a bad name to vilify them. Examples also abound in the English language, most especially in

lexical items denoting sexuality or morality. (Nilsen 1977: 137) explicates this. In the English Language, when a woman has sexual intercourse for the first time, she is not described as giving away her virginity; rather, it is *taken away* from her: she is 'disvirgined' or *deflowered*. These words suggest that in engaging in sex, the woman is *dispossessed* of some aspect of her sexuality. But even when higher control over her sexuality is demonstrated by a woman as happens when she is a 'prostitute', it does not bring about her elevation. Hundreds of demeaning synonyms (e.g. *whore*, *tart*, *slattern*, *harlot*, *nympho*, etc) therefore exist for the word *prostitute*. According to Yusuf (1999), 'In order to suggest that prostitution is normally a female activity, when a man engages in it, he is referred to as a *male prostitute*. All of this points to the fact that the English language deprecates the female gender and discriminates against it.

While this assertion is largely true, it however overlooks the fact that the English language also marginalizes or deprecates the male gender. Research on sexist language has given too much concession to making women invisible, with little or no consideration given to the fact that men are also 'victims' of sexism in language. How does one explain expressions like *gunmen*, *men of the underworld*, *layman*, *mastermind* (violence), etc, each of which has a negative connotation, while primarily referring to the male, with the exclusion of the female. The English language paints not only the female gender in black but also the male gender. This explains Holmes' (2008: 317) stand;

...sexist attitudes stereotype a person according to gender rather than judging on individual merits. Sexist language encodes stereotyped attitudes to women and men. In principle, then, the study of sexist language is concerned with the way language expresses both negative and positive stereotypes of both women and men". [asterisks mine].

3.1 Problems of sexist language

Various researches have identified some peculiar problems associated with the generic form. The first is that referred to by (Martyna 1980) as *cognitive confusion*. This can arise when generic and specific meanings cannot be easily distinguished. Moulton, Robinson and Elias (1978: 1034) give a good example of this in the sentence,

All men are mortal.

In this sentence, the word *men* seems to be clearly generic or 'neutral' but if it were neutral, it would be possible to have the second line of the syllogism as,

Sophia is a man.

This part of the sentence would however sound false and illogical, since Sophia cannot be a male. Such confusion could be avoided if the second line is,

Socrates is a man.

Or if *man* was not used as a generic or cover term for both male and female. The Yoruba translation of the syllogism is free of such confusion, as the word for *man* would be the English equivalent of *humans* or *human beings*.

Gbogbo eniyan ni yoo ku (all humans are mortal)

Eniyan ni Sophia (Sophia is a human being)

It may also be difficult to differentiate between instances where *man* refers to the male and when it refers to all humans in general. This, Holmes (2008:320) refers to as 'becoming increasingly ambiguous between the generic and the masculine meaning'. The sentence,

Man loves to hunt

presents one of such instances, where one may be confused as to whether the word *man* includes or excludes women.

Another problem recognized by Martyna (1980) associated with the use of the generic masculine is that the confusion it generates can lead to the exclusion of the female. The pervading influence of the generic *he/man* is clearly seen in the sentences below:

Each student in the school knows how to spell his name.

A new entrant should know he is not allowed into the circus.

According to Spender (1985: 157);

He/man makes males linguistically visible and females linguistically invisible. It promotes male imagery in everyday life at the expense of female imagery so that it seems reasonable to assume the world is male until proven otherwise. It reinforces the belief of the dominant group that they, males, are the universal, the central, important category so that even those who are not members of the dominant group learn to accept this reality.

The quote above validates the point that women have been so used to being kept down that it would seem strange to get up. Even women are forced to believe they are really an appendage to men.

3.2 Solutions to sexism in language

Various studies (Cheshire 1985, Cameron 1985, etc.) have made meaningful contributions towards 'desexing or degendering' the English language. For instance, it has been suggested that the generic masculine be replaced with *he or she*, *him or her*, and the like, which expressly indicate that women are included in the antecedent of the pronouns as in:

Every good citizen should love his or her country more than him or herself; he or she should be ready to die for it if the need arises.

This proposal was acceptable and even popular until it was found to be sexist still. The assumption here is that even though the feminine gender is not eclipsed, the word order still makes the male the norm and the women the other by placing it second. One would also notice that it is cumbersome and circumlocutory. Two suggestions have been made to resolve this snag. The first is that the singular *they* and its variants be used with singular meaning in place of the gender specific pronouns *he/she*. The above quoted sentence would thus be,

*Every good citizen should love **their** country more than **themselves**; **they** should be ready to die for it if the need arises.*

Though this has solved the problem of *man-oriented* pronouns and is now gaining popularity even in formal speech and writing, it has also succeeded in creating another problem in number concord, as the pronoun, *they* and its forms do not agree in number with their antecedent in this proposed usage. This explains why some hardcore traditional grammarians find its usage ungrammatical or even offensive. This could however be waved aside if one considers the fact that language is dynamic and that language is also a product of conventionality and so, if the language users agree on its usage, it will eventually gain currency and become the norm or standard form.

Another suggestion which seems to be gaining more currency is that which suggests that one should not assume that the male should always come first. This school of thought advocates the alternation and juxtaposition of *she* and *he*, *hers* and *his*, *wives* and *husbands*, instead of the normative *he* and *she*, *his* and *hers*, *husbands* and *wives*, etc. This removes the secondary status assigned to women in English word order. The example above will therefore be,

Every good citizen should love her or his country more than her or himself; she or he should be ready to die for it if the need arises.

In English morphology, occupational words are formed by adding bound morphemes to the original male term. This alone reiterates the dependant, subordinate and appendage nature of women. More often than not, it makes unnecessary reference to the person's sex and suggests triviality, unimportance, or inferiority. Examples which readily come to mind here include, actor/actress, proprietor/proprietress, author/authoress, poet/poetess, host/hostess, usher/usheress. The first in each of the pairs is now generally used to refer to both genders. It would therefore be appropriate to say,

Jennifer is an actor

One problem remains unresolved and seems to be largely unnoticed. This occurs in some lexical items which seem to be inherently masculine. These we shall refer to as *pseudo-masculine words*.

Determining their nature, sexist or nonsexist will no doubt generate some measure of controversy. Even an etymological study of the words may prove unhelpful in establishing their masculine undertone. These and their possible formation are given below;

ombudsman, (ombuds + man),

female (fe + male),

woman (wo + man),

mandate (man + date), etc.

human (hu + man) [could possibly be 'huwoman' in which case *man* still remains]

If these words are related to or are cognates from maleness, or masculinity, then they could be termed sexist and so would require a morphological review.

4.0 Theoretical framework

Each time sexism in language or sexist language is mentioned, the theory of feminism occupies the frontline. Feminism has done a great deal in influencing the clamoring for gender-neutral language. The present work however, though recognizes the role of feminism, is a departure from the norm. The study is based on the assumption or hypothesis that language reflects society's attitudes and even behavior. This view is reinforced by Romaine (2000) in Holmes (2008: 338) where the world is described 'not simply the way it is, but what we make it through language'. It would therefore not be wrong to describe language as the 'reformer and destroyer' of the world. This is what Yule (1996:248) points out by saying 'our languages reflect our concerns'. Language articulates consciousness and plays an indispensable role in our perception of ideas and opinions. For example, the word *rape* or *rapist* could refer to both a male and female but is so associated with the male gender that each time it is mentioned, the image of a man forcefully having carnal knowledge of a woman is evoked. The Mould Theory of Language and Sapir Whorf Linguistic Relativity serve the purpose of this study better.

4.1 Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

Chandler (1994:1) categorizes theories of language which have an interplay between language and thought into two major areas commonly referred to as 'mould theories' and 'cloak theories'. *Mould theories* represent language as 'a mould in terms of which thought categories are cast'. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, sometimes called theory, named after Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf, is a *mould* theory of language. The hypothesis has raised so much controversy among linguists. Linguists who have done thorough research on it have come up with two different versions, which have been termed the strong version, also known as *linguistic determinism* and the weak version, known as *linguistic relativism*. The former states that language determines thought and that linguistic categories limit and determine cognitive categories. The latter states that linguistic categories and usage influence thought and certain kinds of non-linguistic behavior. This study adopts the weak version.

5.0 Methodology

This study was restricted to two Nigerian dailies; the Punch and the Guardian newspapers. The choice of the two out of the numerous Nigerian newspapers was motivated by the fact that the two dailies are household names in the Nigerian print media and occupy an enviable position among dailies and tabloids in Nigeria. The Punch and the Guardian newspapers have consistently maintained their unwavering commitment to excellent journalism, both at home and overseas. They pride themselves as two of the few Nigerian newspapers that almost every Nigerian relies on. A total of 86 articles, (43 from each newspaper), cutting across editorials, opinion pages, news reports, interviews, political columns, etc. were critically reviewed in the newspapers. The newspaper editions selected were from the September and October 2011 editions of the two newspapers. These were reviewed against the background of,

1. sexist language obliterating men,
2. sexist language obliterating women,
3. sexist expressions making women insignificant,
4. sexist expressions making men insignificant,
5. sexist expressions deprecating men,
6. sexist expressions deprecating women,
7. gender-neutral language, and
8. pseudo-masculine expressions.

6.0 Data analysis

6.1 Sexist language obliterating men

Sexist language obliterating men can be defined as the use of language where feminine form is used as a generic form for both genders. Some scholars have advocated this use to balance the gender imbalance in the English language. For instance, instead of saying,

Everybody should come to school with his textbook or

Everybody should come to school with his or her textbook

or even,

Everybody should come to school with their textbook, advocates of this suggest the use of,

Everybody should come to school with her textbook.

Interestingly, no single instance of such use occurs in the data. This probably lends credence to the assertion that the English language is masculine and that it would be impossible to find just one example of a female-based generic (Kleinman, 2007).

6.2 Sexist language obliterating women

This refers to use of language in such a way that masculine terms are used specifically to refer to males and generically to refer to human beings in general. This is what obtains when the pronoun *he* and its variants are used generically. Other popular examples include, *man*, *mankind* *manhood*, *manpower*, *statesman*, etc. The following

expressions culled from the newspapers illustrate this use;

Chairman, Mr. President, lordships, security men, spokesman, kinsmen, policemen, his/himself, statesmen, newsmen, our men, (with reference to police officers which no doubt include women in the force) and *landlords*. The study revealed that sexist language obliterating women is the most commonly used in the newspapers, occurring thirty-five times in the newspapers, with the sexist word, *chairman* topping the list. It occurs twenty-one (21) times, seven (7) in the Guardian Newspaper and fourteen (14) times in the Punch Newspaper. Some of its occurrences were found in expressions like,

Tribunal Chairman, Chairman ad-hoc committee, the Council meeting in the absence of the Chairman, PDP Chairman, Chairman Senate Committee, Chairman of the Nigerian Governors, local government chairman, Association's Chairman, SUBEB Chairman, etc.

The word *chairman* was used generically in instances where the gender of the referent was unknown and when it was also known, irrespective of the gender of the referent. An example illustrating the first point is seen in,

...the Council meeting in the absence of the Chairman or Deputy Chairman

(Guardian Tuesday, September 6, 2001 p. 7).

In this example, the head of the Council could be male or female but the *masculine chairman* is used in place of a gender-neutral term. The social implication of this is that the thought of a woman attaining such a position is almost a tall dream. The use of the *generic man* no doubt will go a long way in making it the sole preserve or monopoly of the men.

A good example illustrating the second point is seen in,

The Chairman SUBEB, Prof. Modupe Adelabu... (Punch Sunday 30th October, 2001).

Here, the Chairperson of the board being referred to is a woman, yet she is referred to as chairman. This use obliterates the woman and should therefore be avoided. In either case, a gender neutral term should have been used. Alternative expressions for the two examples above would be,

...the Council meeting in the absence of the Chair / Chairperson or Deputy Chair/Chairperson

The Chair / Chairperson / Head SUBEB, Prof. Modupe Adalabu...

Another attention-demanding expression is,

...anyone who wishes to render an account of his stewardship to Nigeria and its people should himself... (Guardian editorial)

The indefinite pronoun *anyone* encompasses men and women but the pronouns *his* and *himself* betray this. A good non-sexist alternative is,

...anyone who wishes to render an account of his / her stewardship to Nigeria and its people should himself / herself

Or better still,

...anyone who wishes to render an account of their stewardship to Nigeria and its people should themselves....

Alternatives to the other identified sexist expressions in the papers are provided in the table below.

S/N	SEXIST EXPRESSION	ALTERNATIVE
1.	Chairman	chair, chairperson, Head
2.	Mr. President	the President
3.	security men	security personnel/operatives
4.	Lordships	honors (as in <i>Your Honor</i>)
5.	Spokesman	spokesperson, anchor, information officer
6.	Kinsmen	kinfolks, tribes people, natives
7.	policemen	police officers, police, law enforcement agents/officers
8.	statesmen	diplomats
9.	his/himself	them/themselves, his/her, her/his
11.	newsmen	reporters, journalists, correspondents, news operators
12.	our men, (with reference to police officers which no doubt include women in the force)	our officers, our force
13.	landlords	landowners, landholders, property owners

These sexist expressions make women invisible. It also contributes immensely to the secondary and unimportant role accorded women in most societies. 'Mr', used with 'President; presupposes that the Office is only for the men. This explains why the idea of a woman occupying the elevated Office is novel to most Nigerians, and there can be no doubt that with the almost unalterable dimension the expression has taken in the political scene in Nigeria, the title *Mr* would still be used to refer to a woman who occupies the elevated office, if that ever happens in the country.

6.3 Sexist expressions making women insignificant

These are expressions which downplay, trivialize, stereotype women and paint them as irrelevant or inconsequential. A study of the newspapers reveals instances of this in expressions such as, *female lawyers*, *brother's keeper*, *kinsmen*, *statesmen*, *women activists*, and *chairperson* (i.e when used exclusively to designate only women). *Kinsmen* was used while referring to all the tribes people. This accentuates the picture that the woman is a 'nobody' and so needs not be mentioned. Alternative expressions are provided for the above-mentioned words below.

S/N	SEXIST EXPRESSION	ALTERNATIVE
1.	female lawyers	lawyers
2.	brother's keeper	caring, kindhearted, Good Samaritan
3.	women activists,	activists, advocates
4.	chairperson	chair, chairperson, Head
5.	Kinsmen	kinfolks, tribes people, natives

The use of forms with the modifiers in words like *female lawyers*, *women activists* imply that women are not real lawyers, activists, etc. It is worthy of mention that though *chairperson* is the 'desexed' equivalent of *chairman*, it is still popularly used in some quarters as exclusively referring to females, seeing it as a female equivalent for *chairman*. This is the sense in which it was used in the sentence below; ... Chairperson of the Lagos Island Residents Association Ms Yemisi Ransom Kutu.... (the Punch) It is worthy of mention, at this juncture, that forms which segregate between men and women are becoming obsolete and so words like *actress*, *poetess*, *proprietress*, etc have become outdated.

6.4 Sexist expressions making men insignificant

These are expressions which trivialize, stereotype men and give them a ridiculous role, like *male nurse*, *male secretary*, *male prostitute*, etc. Again, the data gathered reveal no single occurrence of such use.

6.5 Sexist expressions deprecating men

These occur in instances where men are given a semi-devil role. The data observed in the Punch Newspaper contain no such use. The Guardian Newspaper exhibits two instances of these words. They are found in words like, *gunmen*, *mastermind* (violence). Such expressions, either we accept it or not, evoke an image of evil associated with men as a

result of the morphology of the expression. *Gunman*, for instance, will hardly call to mind a woman, even when the perpetrator is a female. Alternative expressions are, *armed robbers*, *criminals*, *burglars*, etc while *hatch*, *instigate*, *device*, etc could be used in place of *mastermind*, when used with negative connotations.

6.6 Sexist expressions deprecating women

Women have often been maligned and smeared in the literature. Sexist expressions deprecating women often disparage, belittle and denigrate them in the literature. Holmes highlights such examples as those found in animal and food imagery in words such as, *bitch*, *chick*, *sugar*, *honey*, etc. One instance of this was found in the Guardian Newspaper in,

For a country that is..., she should be the last to speak, she

Here, the use of *she* to refer to country is comparable to using *chick* in referring to women, a term which defines them as helpless or using food or edible imagery, which is equally insulting. The neutral pronoun *it* should be used in referring to a nation or country, after all, country is genderless or at least its gender cannot be ascertained.

6.7 Gender neutral language

It is commendable that the newspapers make use of some gender-neutral expressions as the following examples show.

28-member reform committee [(Punch) as opposed to sexist *28-man reform committee*]

five-member panel [(Guardian), as opposed to *five-man panel*]

police officers [(Punch), as opposed to sexist *policemen*]

workforce [(Punch), as opposed to sexist *manpower*]

worldwide Head [(Guardian), in place of sexist *Chairman*]

If a country..., it can....[Punch, as against to sexist *she*]

6.8 Pseudo-masculine expressions

What this study terms 'pseudo-masculine' expressions in this study are words which seem to reflect masculine undertone, as a result of their semantic morphology. The Punch Newspaper exhibited two of such words. They are *Ombudsman* and *mandate*. It is subject to controversy whether these words, as a result of their morphology are sexist or neutral. *Public Complaints Commission*, *supervisory body*, *regulator*, etc, would be more appropriate and safer than *Ombudsman*, while *fiat*, *responsibility*, *obligation*, *permission*, etc, would be more appropriate than *mandate*.

Conclusion

This study aimed at looking at the use of sexist language in two popular Nigerian newspapers has revealed the patterns and shades of sexist expressions used in Nigerian dailies. Though most of the occurrences represent bias against women, the study discovered instances where sexist expressions

deprecate men. While the study was restricted to only two Nigerian newspapers and to a limited spectrum, the conclusions reached and the findings are applicable to all newspapers in Nigeria. It is hoped that newspaper editors in Nigeria will find the findings and suggestions (i.e. alternatives to sexist expressions) useful in their effort to adequately represent and respect the feelings of every member of the reading public. There can be no doubt that when sexist expressions disappear or are reduced to the barest minimum in the dailies, a huge milestone will have been passed on the road towards degendered language, and by extension, better written and spoken English by the average Nigerian.

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