

Sociolinguistic and Critical Discourse Analysis of Nigerian Proverbs: The Differences between the Representation of the Genders

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Abstract : Considering the importance of proverbs in socio-cultural life through socialization in any given society, it is deemed important for people to understand the hidden meanings that proverbs may convey. So far, there has been hardly any systematic research in the representation of different genders in Nigeria. Although there are writings on the representation of women in Nigerian proverbs, they are based on the writers' introspection. Beyond that, investigators often tend to overlook the representations of men in proverbs. This study therefore explores from the perspective of sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA) how different genders (men and women) are represented in Nigerian proverbs with particular reference to Igbo-Nigerians; with the aim of uncovering hidden gender inequalities that exist in them. The analysis reveals that Igbo proverbs consistently perpetuate an ideology of gender inequality, that is, male proverbs depict male achievements, power, bravery, and male supremacy; while that of female connotes their submissions to cultural and traditional female domestic roles, chastity, less competent, and women subjugation. The study alerts to how gendered language in proverbs can reflect, create, and sustain gender inequality in societies; and contributes to an education aimed at gender equality, emancipator practice of appropriate language in proverbs, respect for human rights; and of the need to develop strategies for addressing the problem.

Keywords : critical discourse analysis, gender representation, gender stereotypes, Igbo-Nigerian, sociolinguistics analysis, proverbs

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