Men Act, Women Are Acted Upon: Morphosyntactic Framing of the Sexual Intercourse in Online Pornography Titles

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Abstract : According to reliable sources, 4% of all websites is devoted to pornographic material, yet these estimates are often reported to be much higher. The largest internet pornography streaming website reports 21.2 billion visits in 2015 only. Considering the ubiquity of online pornography and the frequency of use, it is necessary to examine its potential influence on the construal of the sexual act and the roles of participants. Apart from the verbal and physical interactions in the pornographic movies themselves, the language in the titles of movies has the power to frame the sexual intercourse. In this study, Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus linguistics approaches will be used to examine the way the sexual intercourse and the roles of the participants are ideologically construed and perpetuated in the Internet pornography discourse. To this end, the study will explore the association between the specific morphosyntactic aspects of the references to performers of both genders, the person and the thematic role, and the gender of referred performer in the corpus of online pornographic movie titles. Distinctive collexeme analysis will be conducted to uncover possible associations between for gender of the performer denoted by the linguistic expression, and the person and thematic role assigned to it in the titles of online pornography movies. Initial results of the chi-square procedure performed on a sample of 295 online pornography movie titles on the largest pornography streaming website 'Pornhub' yielded significant results. The use of the three person categories was not equally distributed between genders, $X2 (2, N = 106) = 32.52$, $p < 0.001$, with female performers being referred to in the third person in 71.7% of the instances, and speaking in the first person 20.8% of the time, whereas male performers spoke in the first person 68% of the time, and were referred to in the third person in 17% of the instances. Moreover, there was a gender disparity in the assignment of thematic roles, with linguistic expressions for women being assigned the Patient role and men the Agent role in 58.8% of the cases, whereas the roles were reversed in 41.2% of the instances, $X2 (1, N = 262) = 8.07633$, $p < 0.005$. The results are discussed in terms of the ideologies surrounding female and male sexuality in the pornography discourse. Potential patterns of power imbalance, objectification, and discrimination are highlighted. Finally, the evidence from psycholinguistic studies on the influence of the language structure on event construal is related to the results of the study.

Keywords : corpus linguistics, gender studies, pornography, thematic roles