

## SEXIST LANGUAGE IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S NOVEL MRS DALLOWAY (CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS)

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### ABSTRACT

*The use of language as a medium of daily communication is only as a tool to facilitate language understanding without realizing that there is an element of discrimination against a particular gender. Sexist language is often found in novels that demonstrated to real life where people associate and deal with stereotypes in society. This research proposes to explain and describe the sexist language types of the main characters found in Mrs. Dalloway novel based on Sara Mills' theory. The research used a qualitative method by applying a critical discourse analysis. The words, phrases, and sentences from monologues and dialogues reflecting sexism in the novel become the data of the research. Data collection techniques used library techniques, namely documents. The data analysis technique used data reduction, data display, and verification techniques. The results of this research show that Sara Mills sexism theory categorizes sexist language into overt and covert sexism. In Mrs. Dalloway novel, there are four types that are consisted of overt sexism: naming, dictionaries, generic pronouns and nouns, and non-parallel terms. For the covert sexism, there are two types in the novel: presuppositions and metaphor.*

**Keywords:** *Sexist Language, Discrimination, Main Characters.*

### INTRODUCTION

All aspects of human existence and social interaction depend on language as a fundamental tool of communication. It is also a significant way to build ties with other people in the community and ease conflict in interpersonal interactions. The use of language for communication involves more than just imparting knowledge. It can be used to express feelings and emotions. However, practically there are many language deviations which are often not many people are aware and if it be investigated further, it is detrimental to some parties. One of them is language distortion that uses words or phrases that are disparaging or insulting due to gender differences. This is what is called sexism. It may be said to be a judgment supported by the gender gap. This view has persisted for a while in our culture, leading to both positive and negative presumptions regarding the presence of sexism in daily life (Chinyelu, 2020).

In literature, the term 'sexism' is used to describe the belief of male supremacy that implies that women are less intelligent and psychologically developed than men. According to Mills (2008), sexism is best understood as a set of discursive practices and stereotypes that evolve over time and are subject to challenge rather than as the reflection of a rigid and immovable patriarchy. It came to the conclusion that sexist language refers to a kind of communication that excludes, denigrates, or trivializes either women or men. These categories lead to the conclusion that sexist language is any language that unfairly treats individuals based on their sex, perpetuates gender stereotypes against both men and women, and emphasizes gender even when it is not a prominent characteristic. Sexist language encodes attitudes toward men and women. The majority of the time, it is a prejudice in favor of men over women. Nneka (as cited in Pratama, 2018) stated that sexist language is any language that is intended to include everyone but accidentally or purposely excludes one gender, which can be either men or

women. The evidence demonstrates that sexist language is frequently used to discriminate against women who are already marginalized. Men and women speak different languages, as evidenced by the words *businessman* and *firefighter*, the non-parallel usage of *Mr.* and *Mrs./Miss*, and the application of male nouns and pronouns as generic words. Additionally, it perpetuates the patriarchal system of culture, in which a man controls women from the side, as well as a society that is dominated by men.

Moreover, sexist language may be found in a variety of items, including literature. Novels have a strong influence since they are a literary form with a primary focus on entertaining. The compositions in novels (story, characters, locations, etc.) are made to be able to make an impact on the readers in order to be highly engaging. Nowadays, novels are among the many things that are thought to be able to inspire people to live their lives.

*Mrs. Dalloway* is written by Virginia Woolf as the best novelist who is one of the most innovative writers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is a well-known as the originator novelist that used technique of consciousness stream to portray the interior live of her characters through her works. The novel itself is one of Virginia's works that attempt to fight against male-dominated human rights, especially regarding unhappiness in marriage. It reveals that the marriage bond causes a woman to lose space for herself. Indeed, there are many characters of Virginia are reflected in the main female character, Clarissa Dalloway. Therefore, the researcher tries to explore the elements of discrimination experienced by the characters through linguistic elements that are displayed by the characters in the novel ("Virginia Woolf Biography," 2021).

The basic idea of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is to study the types of language that are seen as social practices and norms. CDA's focus lies in exploring the ways in which the abuse, domination, and inequalities of social power are enforced, reproduced, and opposed by texts and speech in social and political contexts. In addition, it pays detailed attention to gender statements in the discourse. CDA is to investigate how gender relations of power and gender ideology are constructed and deconstructed in discourse, therefore, criticizing discourses that support patriarchal social order, namely power relations that see men as a privileged social group, while women as a disadvantaged social group that is excluded and powerless through textual representation, and through interactional speech strategies.

It is anticipated that as this research aims to clarify the issues surrounding the topic of sexist language, the sexist language used in the book will represent interactions and societal preconceptions in real life. Consequently, this study uses critical discourse analysis, a method based on Sara Mills' theory, to describe the sexist language as a societal stereotype that may be found in our society through a novel that is included in the interaction between characters and the narrator's monologue in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study applied qualitative approach with descriptive format. Qualitative approaches allow the researcher to gather, group, analyze, and form conclusions. According to Moleong (2018), the qualitative technique is a type of research that yields information from the subject being studied in the form of words. The source of the data is the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf that is taken from *Collected Novels of Virginia Woolf Edited by Stella McNichol* e-book which published by The Macmillan Press Ltd in 1992. It consists of 144 pages. Research data that was taken by researcher were words, phrases, sentences from

dialogue and monologue that contain information about sexist language types related to the main characters on the novel. The researcher herself served as the primary instrument for this study. The technique of collecting and analyzing the data was by reading as well as investigating the words, phrases, sentences, and utterances of the dialogue, monologue, and narration whether contained the sexist language types used by the main characters of the novel. The next phase was categorizing the data according to Sara Mills' theory's two categories of sexist language: overt and covert sexist language. At the end, the next step was interpreting and discussing data to get the findings and conclusion.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf, there are two main characters, namely Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith. They are most involved in the story and experience events. In addition to the three characters, there are also additional characters such as Peter Walsh, Lucrezia Warren Smith, Richard Dalloway, Elizabeth Dalloway, Lucy, Huge Whitbread, Evelyn Whitbread, Sally Saton, Doris Kilman, Scrope Purvis, Justin and Helena Parry, Isabel Pole, Evans, Sir William Bradshaw, Dr. Holmes, Lady Millicent Bruton, Milly Brush, and Miss Pym.

Mrs. Dalloway is placed in the period of literary modernism. It was perfectly written in 'stream of consciousness' style that cause this novel does not have a specific, concrete theme, but it is rather following the line of thought of the main characters. It consists of many thoughts, memories, hopes, and dreams. Contrary to popular belief, Clarissa Dalloway's life is not being chronicled in this work. This popular narrated novel isn't really one, in a way. It is a mosaic portrait that combines elements of Mrs. Dalloway's history and present into one scene from a single day. In addition, it must be more than just a tale about Clarissa Dalloway because it features two characters, each of whom has a separate story that is immediately connected to the other. Even though Clarissa and Septimus, the two main protagonists in the book, never cross paths, they are connected by a number of other characters and the importance they both place on the soul (Course Hero, 2016). The data can be drawn as follows:

Table 1. Sexist Language Classification in Mrs.Dalloway Novel

DATUM	WORDS/ UTTERANCES	CATEGORIES	FUNCTION	STYLE
(1)	Lady Violet	Naming	Term or nickname for someone	Overt
(2)	Daisy			
(3)	Dear			
(4)	silly, pretty, flimsy nincompoops.	Dictionaries	Describing someone	
(5)	invisible; unseen; unknown			
(6)	the man – he	Generic Pronouns and Nouns	Subject pronoun (substitute)	
(7)	the policeman – his		Possessive pronoun	
(8)	man--- his wife	Non-Parallel Terms	Non-equal opposite words	
(9)	Miss	Non-Parallel Terms		

(10)	But women, he thought, shutting his pocket-knife, don't know what passion is. They don't know the meaning of it to men.	Presupposition	Someone's prejudice	Covert
(11)	for there's nothing in the world so bad for some women as marriage, he thought; and politics; and having a Conservative husband, like the admirable Richard.			
(12)	And her old Uncle William used to say a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves.	Metaphor	Teach values	

### Naming

The majority of languages use terminology and names that reinforce sexism, and people often utilize these terms and naming to do so. Many feminists have turned their attention to the practice of naming because they believe it to be very important. Spender, as cited by Romadhon (2020), stated that without names, it is impossible to believe the presence of an item, an event, or a feeling. Names are therefore crucial for the formation of reality. By naming anything, the flux and chaos of existence, which would otherwise be the uniform mass are things we endeavor to order and organize. In addition, Cameron (Mills, 1995) claimed that our languages are sexist, that is, that they 'name' the world from a masculine perspective and in keeping with stereotypes about the sexes.

As the statement from Mills (in Romadhon, 2020) that the word 'governess' or 'mistress' represented how frequently women take on 'the marked form' in language. The marked form or the feminine form in the marked word is one of the sexist practices as males usually do not appear in the marked form or are simply unmarked in the language. Affixes like 'lady', '-ette', '-enne', and '-trix' can be used to name ladies. For instance, 'lady poet', 'authoress', 'lioness', 'comedienne', and so on. On the datum (1), this phrase is well-founded sexist because of the use of the phrase '*lady violet*'. In this case, it is meant to mention the term of a dignified woman. This term directly states that a woman can be categorized unilaterally by men based on her level of honor. Moreover, the term significantly positions a woman to have a special label or vocation where men do not necessarily have that vocation.

The narrow of women in language, as defined by Weatherall (in Rahayu & Meisuri, 2015), refers to the finding that males are more frequently described in terms of what they do than women are in terms of their familial relationships. Due to the insights they offer regarding a culture's worldview and social hierarchy, naming and naming practices have been a significant part of the study of languages. The words *daisy* and *dear* on the data (2) and (3) are the category of words that men use to show their love for women or a nickname for their female partners. The number of

affectionate calls for women than men results many differences in power relations between men and women. This also shows that men seem to be more dominant with the variety of affection they have for women. On the other hand, women actually look weaker with various mentions or affectionate calls to them.

### Dictionaries

Mills (2008) delivered that the meaning of terms in dictionaries varies based on who created them, how they were intended to be understood, and how the reader interpreted them. The datum (4) has meaning that explicitly describes the worthlessness and powerlessness of women. These are clearly meant to mention that a woman is like thin cotton that is easily swayed by the wind, that she does not have a strong stance, no power and always behind the position of men. These words indicate that women deserve to be pitied, cared for and admired by men only.

The datum (5) has the connotation of describing married women. That they are considered to no longer have a significant self-image, they are trapped in only household responsibilities. When compared to their status before being in a marriage bond, women can more freely determine what they want to do, as well as in their social relationships and careers without being tied to anything. In this case, it means that the position of women is always overshadowed by the appearance of husbands who are more dominant in determining decisions in the household.

### Generic Pronouns and Nouns

Most sexist language in English is used using masculine pronouns, which is a typical habit. *Man* (datum (6)) is referred to in the phrase using a masculine pronoun. Since *man* refers to all human beings or persons, we cannot simply alter the term '*man*' to '*male exclusively*,' and then eventually transform it to a masculine pronoun like *he*. Whether it is meant to be a male or a female in this context, the term *man* has an ambiguous connotation. Due to this, it is astonishing how the male pronoun *he* obscures the existence and contribution of women when used in place of the term *man*. Therefore, the usage of masculine pronoun functions as generic pronoun which can refer to both woman and man. So, this fact creates one of the discrimination in the language (Chinyelu, 2020).

In these phrases (datum (7)), the term *policeman* is referred to using the subject and object male possessive pronouns. The reader is led to believe by this practice that a police officer must be a guy or a man. Even though males predominately hold these positions, women are nonetheless capable of carrying out the same duties. Men are stronger creatures than women, as evidenced by this truth. In light of this, the female is not included in this type of occupation in this case. By substituting the term *policeman* for a masculine possessive pronoun, women are rendered linguistically invisible in this situation. People will continue to assume that engineers, farmers, accountants, and mechanics are invariably males, perpetuating this sex role stereotyping. It can also happen in representations that presuppose that all nurses and childcare providers are women, whereas all firemen and police officers are males, or that all women are always spouses and mothers. Therefore, it's critical to refrain from using any inherently sexist language. It's equivalent to saying that people who are strong, intellectual, or powerful

are typically personified as males, whereas people who are docile, receptive, or weak are typically personified as women (Talosa & Conchita Malenab-Temporal, 2018).

### **Non-Parallel Terms**

The words *man* and *wife* are in opposition to one another (datum (8)). The definition of *husband* as a male companion is the same as that of *man*, who is the opposite of a *wife*. These concepts are considered non-parallel since they don't share any similarities or superior qualities with each other. Consequently, it might be considered the use of sexist language based on a gender differentiation attribute (Nneka, 2012).

The title *Miss* (datum (9)) is applied to the names of women who are not married. Both married and single men can use the title *Mister* in their addresses. This parallelism is seen sexist since there is no functional equivalent between the terms *Miss* and *Mr*. *Miss* is only used to refer to unmarried women, but *Mr*. is often used to refer to both married and single males. Because this categorization is unfair, that is what the author intends. Men's married status is not included, whereas women's marital status is, which is unfair and unnecessary. This is one of the clearest instances of the English usage of the difference between *Mrs.* and *Miss*. (Nneka, 2012).

On the other hand, the categories of covert sexist language that are found are namely presupposition and metaphor. The further discussion is explained below:

### **Presupposition**

Pratama (2018) stated that an utterance's underlying meaning category (datum (10)) is known as presupposition. An utterance may reflect a presumption. A presumption may occasionally serve as evidence of sexism. This bold-sentence describes prejudice against a woman who is considered to never understand what a man wants. In this case, a man instinctively assumes that a woman is not responsive and seems to pretend to be in the face of a problem. In the view of a man, a woman is required to always be alert and must understand what a man desires without any prior explanation. Thus, this assumption results in inequality of opinion for a woman and actually shows how superior men are compared to women.

In the expression described above (datum (11)), there is an affirmation of the stereotype that has developed and tends to be justified by society at large, it is the existence of women who have been bound by a marriage relationship will not be the same as those who are still single. This is clearly seen in the utterance *for there's nothing in the world so bad for some women as marriage*, which fully describes that married women have a monotonous life that is only dwelling on household matters, husband or children. In fact, nowadays it is not uncommon for housewives to carry out dual roles in their lives, those are taking care of the household and their careers. Therefore, those expressions are still conservative and seem to doubt the ability of women to be equal to men.

### **Metaphor**

Black (as cited in Siregar et al., 2020) stated that metaphor is a strategy for illustrating the implications that are based on an analogy of the two subjects' structural differences. Metaphor makes an extremely conservative appearance at the phrase level

to support stereotyped knowledge. It might cause us to perceive some events, in particular, in a stereotypical way. The bold-expression described above (datum (12)) is included in metaphor which has meaning that not only visually a woman can be seen from her appearance but her character and behavior will also be reflected in how she can put herself well in interacting with the surrounding environment. Indirectly, this statement also emphasizes that a woman must be able to uphold her norms and honor in society. This is in contrast to the figure of a man which they are considered common and acceptable especially in their youth by doing things that violate the norm or being indifferent to all things related to etiquette, manners and polite behavior that exist in society. As stated by Gloria Fwangyil (cited in Jufanny & Girsang, 2020):

*Women are subjected to male oppression and suppression at various stages of life. Unfortunately, female oppression is deeply ingrained in the culture of the societies which ensures the continuation of patriarchal control. This situation makes it impossible for women to seek ways of liberating themselves because doing so will be tantamount to challenging the age long tradition and customs of the people.*

## CONCLUSION

The main characters' discourse is seen to have both overt and covert sexism in the outcomes. These outcomes are categorized into four groups: naming, dictionaries, generic pronouns and nouns, and non-parallel terms. Presupposition and metaphor are two of the three categories that describe covert sexist language. Consequently, whether on purpose or not, sexism in English contributed to the unfair treatment of and prejudice towards women in comparison to males. Since language and conduct are intimately connected, it stands to reason that sexist discourse in English will have an effect on the social attitudes of its speakers, leading to sexist views. The majority of linguists and feminists mostly see this in a bad light, thus it's critical to dispel those ideas. Consider in particular how women have played a significant role in the advancements of modern civilization, including those in science, technology, and education. Because of this, the author advises the readers to make an effort to eliminate sexism in English, such as by replacing sexist phrases with gender-neutral ones.

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