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## Intra-Female Gender Inclusiveness versus Exclusiveness: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Madams and Maids Intercourse

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### Abstract:

*Studies on women issues have dwelt so much on inclusiveness of women in socio-political, socio-economic and socio cultural life of every nation as against the marginalizing, dominating and subordinating structures in most societies that hinders women from equal rights and privileges as full human beings. The invaluable contributions of women to nation building today is a great dividend of the giants of women emancipation. Nevertheless, the marginalizing, dominating and subordinating structures that constituted the bane to women development tend to be existent among the female folk. The data for this study are excerpts from a Nigerian home video titled World Apart. Using the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study sets out to highlight from the home video, the experiences of Nigerian maids in the hands of their madams. The findings of the study show that madams' language use depict acts of exclusion of the maids from the rights and privileges that can accrue to every women. This results in the notion of in-group and out-group women as a result of the differences in their social location. Portrayed in the choice of derogatory and dehumanizing languages employed in the Queen's discourses are evidences to the fact that maids are removed from the realities of womanhood as fought for by feminism and its African equivalent, womanism. This also buttresses the issue of power asymmetry between women which project some women as less than humans or second class citizens in the hands of their fellow women. The study recommends that madams recognize maids as women and create opportunities to develop and empower them so that they can take their rightful place in the society.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, feminism, womanism, critical discourse analysis, films

### 1. Introduction

Sustainable development is a development design that seeks to enhance individuals socially, educationally, politically, economically, morally and spiritually. It provides an acceptable platform and practices for a better interaction of both human and non-human elements in the society in order to ensure sustained improvement. It also includes all aspects of human growth, including physical, emotional, intellectual, social, perceptual, and personality development. Strategies that promote sustainable development include improved education, social justice, strong economic and political reforms, citizen's empowerment, environmental protection and equity. In essence, for there to be a development that can be sustained, the individuals within the society must be reformed, informed and empowered with the right tools for the right cause.

This concern is not distinct from that of the first wave feminism and the African perspective of feminism known as womanism. The experiences of women as captured in literature or expressed in the organization of societies, constituted the aim and aspirations of feminism as a theory and as a socio-political movement to fight male domination in virtually all important aspects of life that promotes social inequalities and injustices against women. It is in view of these conditions that women found themselves in that the first feminist's movement was initiated and (Kolawole 1997:48) sees feminism as:

A tool to retrieve the female self from vice grip of patriarchy, to inscribe the female self in the contours of society that is under phallic oppression and repression. To assert and affirm the undependability of the female as a complementary vector in societal engineering process, to testify subversively against male subjugation of and chauvinism against women and attack dominant masculinity that refuses a meaningful space to the female in diverse publics.

It is obvious that the patriarchal society lost sight of the imbalances that existed in different societies, families and homes where the women were not given their rights and opportunities, which invariably affected the development of such societies. In other words, contributions of women in the development of societies, families and homes today are valuable assets that men ignored as a result of their oppressive ideologies. Through the ideological tools of the different feminists

activities, most of the power-imbalances, oppressions, dominance, prejudices, denials, and the likes, that characterized social order of the patriarchal societies have been addressed, resulting in what Mugo in James (1980) describes thus: Nigerian women as well as the sisters across the continent are truly making giant strides in commerce, education, politics, administration and professional activities.... Nigerian women are front liners in national, state and community development in Nigeria. In addition to the grand strides of women, she cites Marizu who is of the opinion that African women have made a monumental impact in the diplomatic arena, as many have been saddled with ambassadorial responsibilities; others have led successfully in different posts in Nigeria government and in development schemes across the continent. These show that the feminist struggle for the inclusion and recognition of women in all aspects of the society is a fight for sustainable development as evidenced in the remarks above.

The concern of this study is to highlight the fact that most African women are yet to recognize the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of other African women to the point that there exist among women the same marginalizing, oppressive, aggressive, dehumanizing and subordinating activities that characterized patriarchal societies. This has given birth to the concept of in-group and out-group class within the female folk, evidenced in the language use of some women against their fellow women.

Just as Bates puts it, "language is a tool, we use it to do things". Using the tool of Critical Discourses Analysis, the study will analyse the discourses of the Queen as a madam in relation to Ulinma themaid in the video- World Apart, to highlight the briefs of the madams about their maids as expressed in the language of the Queen, which gives them power to treat their maids as less than women or humans.

Foucault (1972: 117) posits that "discourse is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined" By this assertion, taking discourse as a group of statements means that discourses are declarations. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) assert that "language is a 'machine' that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world. This also extends to the constitution of social identities and social relations." One of the functions language plays is declaration or making a statement which also means stating a fact or truth. In this wise, women discourses make statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Hence, the statements or the discourses of the Queen in the home video embody ideologies that reflect the conditions of existence between the madams and their maids.

Critical Discourse Analysis is concerned with what we do with language and how we do it. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) assert that the primary interest of critical discourse analysis is to deconstruct and expose social inequality as expressed, constituted and legitimized through language use. CDA sees language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk. In this wise, the discourses as contained in the home video are evidences of social domination and subjugation which exist within the women's world. From the critical discourse approach to language study, Fairclough (2003) opines that language is an irreducible part of social life and that the dialectic relation between language and social reality is realized through social events (texts), social practices (orders of discourse) and social structures. The central claim of CDA is that the way certain realities get talked or written about—that is, the choices speakers and writers make in doing it—are not just random but ideologically patterned. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), Critical Discourse Analysis sees language as social practice, which draws from Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar of ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language in its account of language use. In other words, discourse as a social practice is a product of a society; it sustains a society, as well as reproduces a society. Hence, its discursive practices can embody ideologies that help produce, sustain and reproduce unequal power relations between social classes, ethnic/ cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people and in this case, the ways madams represent the maids.

Fairclough (1992) methods of analysis in language studies and social and political thought, proposes the study of discourse as social practice, and points out both the socially determined and socially transformative properties of discourse. He points out that discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation. He goes further to say that there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure. In this wise, the queen's language choices or discourses would signify her alignment with what Althusser (1971) calls in-group and out-group members of a society

And just as Phipps (2001) puts it, "human beings do not live in the objective world alone, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society". The emphasis here is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the people. In other words, the Queen's language helps us to see, hear and experience certain realities that exist in the world of women.

## 2. Framework

Wodak's Critical Discourse Analysis framework is of relevance to this study. This is a framework that is concerned with discourse constructions of social exclusions of out-group members of the society through the discourse of differences and reinventing of the past through what she calls "sanctified narratives". Her approach to discourse takes into account the socio-historical contexts that give power to enact, confirm, legitimize, reproduce, challenge and dominate as a result of the way language has been used over time. She makes available, six important strategies that are useful in discourse analysis but the study will focus on three of these strategies thus: Strategies of predication that leads to stereotypes or evaluative attributives of positive or negative traits. Strategies of argumentation has to do with certain linguistic elements that reflect choices of topics that are used to justify inclusion or exclusion and the strategy of perspectivization that uses framing to show representation of discourse participants.

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. World Apart

This home video is an intriguing movie that embodies an experience of a young peasant girl in the hand of another woman who forgot her beginnings as having come from a poor peasant home but was lucky to have been picked up by a prince who saw potentials of royalty in her and made her what he wanted in a woman. The son like the father, had an eagle's eye and spotted another poor peasant girl with such qualities as mature, humble, intelligent and beautiful and went for her. The mother, the Queen, was blindfolded by power and status that she objected to the marriage and went as aggressively as paying for the death and burial of these qualities in this peasant girl rather than paying to develop them. This movie projects the class divide between women based on social status and the attendant struggles. And just as Ogunipe (1997) observes that women are the problem of their fellow women, the excerpts of the Queen's discourses goes a long way to support the assertion. The Prince believed in transforming the poor peasant girl into the status of a queen because he saw certain potentials in her that needed to be developed but the mother was against his view of the girl as contained in the discourses below:

- Maid: welcome sir, welcome ma  
 Queen: Young girl, did my son tell you that he is a prince? Did he tell you that he was going to welcome his royal parents? (power/superiority)  
 Maid: Yes ma, he told me and asked me to wear my best cloth (politeness)  
 Queen: And this is your best cloth? Let me inform you that those who associate with the prince should be well dressed and not those that dress like beggars(hostility/humiliation)(Prince brings Ulinma to the table at home)  
 Queen: Who is this thing beside you? So you are very proud to invite a tortoise to dine with your father on the same table? (superiority/ dehumanization/ humiliation)  
 Prince: Mom take it easy with her, she is my friend  
 Queen: (to the house help at the table) You will agree with me that you don't fit in here. Go outside when we are done the remains will be given to you. (superiority/ humiliation/ dehumanization)  
 Queen: Get out! (the girl runs out and prince gets angry and walks out)  
 Queen: Pick a female friend from anywhere and I will support you but not from the gutters. (humiliation/ dehumanization)  
 Prince: Why should I leave that girl? Is it because she is poor, timid and a peasant girl? Or what is the difference?  
 Queen: The difference is in the way we live. (superiority/power) (As the Prince arrives from his friend's place,the mother confronts him thus:)  
 Queen: You went to visit the house help. What did you find in that girl, her dirty body, her dirty clothes, her unkempt hair or what? (humiliation)(the Queen goes to visit Ulinma's uncle's wife) Ulinma's uncle's wife Live long my queen (on her knees as tradition demands) (powerlessness)  
 Queen: If I cough you will vanish. You have dragged me out, look at me, the eagle that comes out once in a year. Send the girl back to her village. Take this =N= 150,000 and tell my son the girl suddenly took ill and died. I am buying back the dignity of my family with that money. (power/ subjugation/ humiliation)  
 Prince: Where is Ulinma? (on a visit to Ulinma)Ulinma's unckle's wife She suddenly took ill and died and has been taken to the village for burial (powerlessness/ dominated) Queen (to her mourning son) Youcan't marry a girl from the gutters. There are intelligent and beautiful girls in the city that fits into your class. (superiority/ humiliation)(The Prince gets a hit of the truth of Ulinma's return to the village and traced her to her village. He decided to stay with her in the village unless the father rents an apartment for her and her mother and employs tutors that will teach her and her mother etiquette and language skills that will bring her status the mother wants).  
 Queen: Are you still mourning the maid? Is it not time for you to start another relationship?  
 Prince: I am not ready to go into another relationship now. I will take my time. (after some months Ulinma has been translated into a city girl and the plan starts)  
 Prince: Mother, I have something to tell you  
 Queen: What can that be?  
 Prince: I've found a wife. She is a daughter of an ambassador.  
 Queen: Oh, that's interesting to hear. You have to invite her home. I can't wait to see my daughter-in law (the next day, Ulinma visits)  
 Prince: Here comes the queen of the Prince  
 Queen: You are welcome my dear. Feel free, this is your home. You are such a wonderful daughter in-law. You are such a perfect match for my son. You are mature, humble, intelligent and beautiful – God bless you my daughter. Lucky is a mother in-law who finds a good daughter in law.  
 Queen: (after Ulinma had gone) That girl is intelligent and beautiful and a good combination. I want you to start off the traditional marriage arrangements before other men will outsmart and overtake you. I can't stand losing that girl as a daughter-in law.(After the marriage, the Prince decided to keep the cloth Ulinma wore the first day to their house for a later date in order to teach her mother not to despise anybody because of her perceived social status. In agreement with the King a feast was called where Ulinma appeared in that house maid cloth to shock the mother-in law.)  
 Prince: Mother look at that lady seated over there. Can you recognise her?  
 Queen: Yes of course! She is my daughter-in law

Prince Are you sure? Look at her very closely  
 Queen Very much sure, she is Lilian my daughter-in law (The Prince motions Lilian (Ulinma) to go wear the old cloth she wore the first day she came to the palace with her hair rearranged.)  
 Prince Mother Can you recognize that lady that is walking into the sitting room.  
 Queen (perplexed) what is happening here?  
 Prince This is the same peasant girl you threw out of this house some time ago. I transformed her and her mother with the help of my father. Life is all about equality. We should strive to make people what we want them to be. You can see beyond clothing and social status a betrayal of what you want. Spend on someone to make her what you want her to be.

#### 4. Discussion

The social class in the head of the Queen played out even from the point of phatic communication between her the maid at the airport where the maid met her first,; having been asked by the prince to accompany him to go welcome the parents from a trip. The language of exclusion was evident from the point of greeting exchange. The use of the word: "prince" and "royal" contrasts with the word "beggar" which reflects the queen's perception of the maid. This class divide led to further use of derogatory, dehumanizing and humiliating languages thus: "this thing", - you do not fit in here, a girl from the gutters, dirty body, tortoise etc.

After the prince had transformed the maid, the following adjectives of quality: wonderful, perfect match, good combination, mature, humble, intelligent and beautiful were used by the same queen to qualify the maid. These reveal some of the embedded potentials in so many young women who are hired as maids. These potentials get killed, buried and destroyed by such acts as exhibited by the Queen. These women's perception of the maids are not based on the womanhood in the maids which needs encouragement, support and development but are based on the words and phrases below as identified from the Queen's discourses which embody the attitude of savagery based on the fact that Ulinma is a maid and the word maid here could connote slave:

Royal parents'	vs	peasant parents
Prince	vs	beggars, this thing, tortoise
Well-dressed	vs	poorly dressed
Prince	vs	peasant
Fits into royal home	vs	not fit into royal home
Eating from the table	vs	eating remains or remnants from the table
From the city	vs	from the gutters
The way we live	vs	the way they live
Clean body, cloths and kempt hair	vs	dirty body, dirty cloths and unkempt hair
Life worthy of royalty	vs	life that worth =N=150,000.00

One of the practices that feminists believe constituted their socialization to powerlessness is the use of the grammatical techniques of marking, that is, naming practices and the use of certain adjectives that undermined, diminished and trivialised women's worth. The Queen deployed these grammatical technique of marking in bringing Ulinma to what the linguist, Edward Sapir (1963) expressed as "our view of reality... an abbreviated version of the world that our language has edited. In other words, the queen's utterances reveal that the characteristics or labels of people are but socially constructed attributes and boundaries that are often used to differentiate people from one another for economic, social and political purposes, whereby some groups obtain more privileges than others. (Omi & Winant, 1994)

In this instance, feminism as a social movement that seeks to redress the imbalances in the society by providing women with same rights and opportunities as men, in order for them to be able to take their rightful place in the world, is defeated by the practices of some women like the queen. It goes further to defeat Emenyi (2005: 127) assertion that the common agenda of women writers and critics and other women activists are tied to an assertion of equality and awareness of sisterhood, the communality of women. The reality of this self-concept damage or attitude of exclusion, has a very long lasting and more harmful effect that can result in discouragement, despair, and depression as well as other health related issues.

The queen does not see Ulinma as a human being; deserving of any good thing nor life, which is a slap on womanhood. The social identity theory categorizes people into two groups, in-group and out-group. This intra group struggle, also known as social competition, mostly comes with the in-group condemning the out-group, this is encapsulated in the verbal aggression employed by the queen.

According to Luther and Legg (2010), aggression can be defined by its three intersecting counterparts: indirect, relational and social. Indirect aggression occurs when the victim is attacked through covert and concealed attempts to cause social suffering. This is contained in the queen's utterance thus:

- Send the girl back to her village. Take this =N= 150,000 and tell my son the girl suddenly took ill and died.

Relational aggression can be a threat to terminate a friendship or spreading false rumors:

- Pick a female friend from anywhere and I will support you but not from the gutters.

The third type of aggression, social aggression, "is directed toward damaging another's self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take direct forms such as verbal rejection, negative facial expressions or slanderous utterances or social exclusion:

- What did you find in that girl, her dirty body, her dirty clothes, her unkempt hair or what?

Language is a tool for expressing oneself using words and it serves as a way of knowing, valuing, and experiencing the world. The world in this case include the world of madams and maids, hence, it has become obvious from the language use as employed in the films, that the +Higher role woman does not respect the individuality and uniqueness and the – Higher role woman in a discourse situation. This is a reality that can be buttressed further by Gracia (2004) which asserts that language does things and that it is the creator of realities.

Luke (1997) puts it that critical analysis of language is necessary for describing, interpreting, analysing, and critiquing social life reflected in texts. Here, the divide between the madam and the maid can be seen as a reflection of the notion or attitude of master and slave relationship which dominated the life of so many black people. Critical Discourse Analysis reveals through studies that written texts and spoken words reveal discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias. In other words, discourses are not arbitrarily framed, rather, they are ideologically constituted. An individual's social location determines how one will be perceived by others in the society and it has been established that the notion of difference, whatever its value conceptually, rarely projects social equality or justice or mutual respect. As Halliday (1973:106) puts it, "language lends structure to . . . experience and helps determine . . . ways of looking at things". Hence, in the African world of women, language use tends to violate the concerns of the feminists as a whole and the womanists in particular.

## 5. Conclusion

Dehumanization in women language use occur discursively in certain forms of language that likens their fellow women to non-human/ animals, facilitated by status, power, and social connection, and results in behaviors like exclusion, violence, and support for violence. The language choices made by the Queen reveal evidences of aggression in madams versus maids' discourses which are inimical to the realization of the feminist's concerns. Portrayed in the choice of derogatory languages are the act of humiliation and dehumanization that leads to a basement of pride or self-esteem in the maids, which results in the attitudes of defenseless lowliness, inferiority or unhealthy submissions. Evidently from this study is that such low-esteem behaviours are caused by language of intimidation, physical or mental mistreatment, often used by madams as a way of asserting power over the oppressed maids. In the Queen's discourses are evidences to the fact that maids are removed from the realities of womanhood which also buttress the issue of power asymmetry between women which project some women as less than humans or second class citizens in the hands of their fellow women.

## 6. Recommendations

The study recommends that madams recognize maids as women and create opportunities to develop and empower them so that they can take their rightful place in the society. In addition, women in power must make conscious efforts to see to the development and empowerment of the less privileged women, especially maids in our society through the use of appropriate and encouraging language choices.

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