

Good example of how
can we respond to
the imbalanced
power relation
between men a...

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Introduction

Sexism is a major political issue since many centuries. This is assumed to be revealed much in the languages used. Most people consider English to be a sexist language since it is considered man-made and the society is patriarchal. Margaret Piercey has discussed about numerous works by authors like Cameron, Phillipson, Spender, Kramer and Triachlae in her essay “ Sexism in the English Language”. In this article, she has tried to portray the fact, how the English language discriminates and marginalizes women in society; how ESL teachers try to educate their students using non-sexist language. English is considered as a dominant language. According to Phillipson, teaching English has three functions. First, it is to qualify people to build up the nation; second, to bring up ‘ modern’ ideas; third, English is repressive and so there is no other option than using the language.

Drawbacks of Patriarchal System

A patriarchal system is one, which is dominated by men, and the women are suppressed. Although the world has reached great heights in civilization, advancements in technology and abolition of cultures encouraging gender inequality; a patriarchal system still exists in the form of language. It is believed that the language was developed by men and was borrowed by women just for the sake of communication. This is the reason behind why the English language is sexist. Some of the drawbacks revealed by patriarchal system and sexist language are discussed as follows.

- Non-Assertive. In “ Man Made Language”, Spender explains that although women learn to speak like men, they are regarded as less successful and

powerful because of the gender. Women tend to be hesitant, non-assertive and hence considered to lack something. This assumption of men tends to suppress women. It can be well understood by considering an example of works in literature. Both men and women contribute to the literature and literary works. However, a woman's work will be less highlighted when compared to a man's work.

- ' Person'. Piercey has discussed about the case, when there was a discussion whether or not can women be included to come under the term ' Person'. This clearly denotes how women are completely marginalized and discriminated. For long, there were no terms in this language to refer to women. Even now, certain phrases like " Man overboard!" denote the men and women are not considered. There are many bad and harsh terms referring to women and for men who are controlled by women. In fact, if a man is controlled over by a woman, he will not even be considered as a man.

- Dominance. Clearly, patriarchy is a system of dominance. Stanley describes the sexist language as a means of masculine interpretation of the world. He explains that, since men developed the language, they had generated terms referring only to themselves and what they considered as important. It clearly interprets that, women were not considered. If we notice, most of the positive words in English will refer to a man. Men have projected most of the world's negative aspects against women.

- History and Herstory. History is largely made up of stories, which describe the accomplishments and victories of men, wars fought by men; there will be very few stories about the accomplishments of women. While growing up, a

boy will be told stories in which the male character achieved a feat or saved people; but a girl will be told stories of how the prince or soldier or any male character saved and achieved. In other words, men always consider themselves as 'doers' and women as their dependents.

In retrospect, a broad view is that, women are weak, subtle, hesitant, non-competitive, and dependent. This has been the opinion through all centuries of life and civilization on the earth. However, this myth has been broken and proved that women are in no way little when compared to men. They have proved themselves to a great deal in almost all fields of technology, sports, business, politics, etc. It is no more believed that only men can make more money; only men can lead groups effectively; etc. Despite of all the achievements and growth of women, sexism exists at the language level. This imbalanced state needs to be corrected to develop well-nurtured, equal future generations.

Balancing Power between men and women in international language

Lately in the 20th and 21st centuries, there have been numerous remarkable events regarding patriarchy and men power. For the first time in history, a potential and sustained way to fight against patriarchy has risen. Many feminist writings, social actions have taken place to discourage patriarchy and evolve a society with absolute equality among men and women. Equality has been achieved in fields of career and achievements. However, it exists in languages. In order to encourage equality in language, people have started developing a neutral gender language.

Neutral-gender language is a language in which no gender-specific pronouns

will be used, if the sentence refers to a group, which includes persons from both genders. A plural pronoun will be used instead of a generic pronoun. For e. g. ' Doctors treat their patients.' Instead of, ' The doctor treats his patient.' Mostly gender-based pronouns will be used in work places, since there is a tendency to label works suitable for men and women. Instead, if generic pronouns are not used, the language will not seem to be gender biased and no suppression will be felt. This kind of language use is encouraged in many institutions and organizations.

Many organizations have developed rules to make their students practice a non-sexist language. They stress upon using plural or collective pronouns in places where gender-based are probably used, the management tries to avoid naming a designation which denotes only male gender. In schools, ESL teachers play an important role in educating students about gender-neutral languages, says Piercey. She says that, as teachers, they must be aware that the English language is sexist and be conscious when using terms. Piercey believes that it is up to the teachers to teach the students about ' herstory' and ' history'. This will help the women become more self-confident and strong.