

China241 - chinese language analysis (homework)



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Number: Lecturer: Q1: Why there is lack of salient gender differentiation among male and female employees in owned enterprises and a sharp gender differentiation in the Waiqi (foreign business) group.

A major reason why state professionals do not have salient gender differentiation is the long established culture by the Peoples Republic of China of state feminism involving neutralizing feminism in an effort to eliminate social inequalities. It treats men and women as equal hence allocates state professionals jobs on equal basis regardless of sex, religion, or any other categorization. Labor not gender thus produces social identity. Looking at the four linguistic features of Beijing Mandarin or standard language (PTH), there is thus no major difference for males and females in rhotacization (85%, 83%), lenition (63%, 57%), interdental (ts) (39%, 0%) and realization of neutral tone as full tone (0%, 1%). The state professionals use these local Beijing features frequently except full tone variant while Waiqi professionals use non-local variants and a foreign language like English and German.

Sharp gender differentiation for Waiqi professionals is due to value of language in producing cosmopolitan professional identity, company image projection and decline of state feminism due to new market economy (Zhang, 405). Use of linguistic features shows this difference for males and females: rhotacization (64%, 23%), lenition (47%, 27%), interdental (ts) (15%, 0%) and full tone (10%, 31%). Language and gender related characteristics are resources or symbolic capital for Waiqi as they are used to project company image. Having foreign language skills is crucial for Waiqi as means for interpretation and communication with Chinese businesspersons but women are more constrained to use it than men do due to work

requirements.

Language and gender have great impact on professional access to opportunities and career trajectories. Unlike state enterprises where there are no front desks or need to present company face, Waiqis value company image in the competitive market hence employ women to represent the face of the company. These women must have foreign language skills and be presentable and firm employs them as receptionists and secretaries.

Regardless of their area of expertise, they begin as secretaries, move up the ladder, and sometimes continue performing administrative duties whilst men begin with doing real business such as marketing (Zhang, 411). According to Zhang, "this has to do with gendered practice in parent corporations" and political and economic circumstances (413).

Q 2: Main ideas of "Asymmetric in Social Gender Terms" and "Asymmetric Gender Marking in Vocabulary Items."

The Chinese language is not "gender language" like European or other languages in order to avoid sexism. It therefore has no grammatical gender to distinguish words between masculine, feminine or neutral class such as he and she (Yan, 31). However, this is only in oral Chinese language and not written language, as it cannot escape distinguishing female-specific or male-specific nouns. Language being socially constitutive helps to produce and reproduce unequal power relations between social classes, ethnic groups and other categories (Yan, 32). As such, asymmetry is inherent function in unequal representation and positioning of women and men in different status.

Asymmetry in social gender terms is gender role stereotyping whereby men occupy high-status jobs such as lawyer and women lower-status jobs such as

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secretary (Yan, 37). This is same as asymmetric gender marking in vocabulary by Moser and occurs when we refer women taking up traditional male occupations with a gender marked term (Moser, 15). If female occupy high-status jobs, a gender-related modifier or prefix is used. For example, female judge and not just judge as is the case for males. Asymmetry in gender terms is prevalent in language use especially in addressing or naming. For example, its use in making personal references such as “ she is brown.” A woman taking up husband’s name after marriage is an asymmetry. This makes women inferior. It is also prevalent in the way children take up family name of the father. This shows the patriarchal nature of society despite claims of eliminating sexism or sexist language. Another example is formal address of women in civil service. This is to reassure their position in male-dominated society (Yan, 33).

Another case is references in language whereby female radical character is used in word formation than that of men. The female character denotes “ negative meanings” such as evil, wicked, treacherous (Yan, 35). Even used in positive terms such as lovely charming woman, it only shows the qualities women must have to appease men hence they are covertly sexist. Male character is default (ren) in Chinese language hence no need for a male radical (Moser, 12). This ren radical is inclusive of men and women. For example, the word man refers to man and woman. I agree with both Yan and Moser that gender asymmetries exist in all areas in the world and only serve to mask sexism prevalent in society.

Works Cited

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