Reflections on Gender Asymmetries in the Portuguese Language: Linguistic Structures and Social Implications

Gaozhao Chen *

Macao Polytechnic University. Rua de Luís Gonzaga Gomes, Macao, China

Abstract:

This article examines the manifestations of gender asymmetry in the Portuguese language, where a gendered grammatical system assigns masculine and feminine genders to nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. Such a system can reinforce gender asymmetries, stereotypes, and inequalities, especially affecting women, by perpetuating and normalizing male dominance and female marginalization within the language. Drawing upon the sociolinguistic theories of Edward Sapir (1933) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1941), as well as the theories of women's writing and gender studies from scholars such as Judith Butler (1993) and Karen Sacks (1979), this paper analyzes how these gender asymmetries are represented in the Portuguese language. Additionally, it explores the sociocultural and historical contexts that contribute to these linguistic phenomena, such as the pervasive influence of patriarchal values and norms embedded in the language. The paper also considers the implications of these findings for language policy and educational practices, arguing that recognizing and addressing gender biases in language can be a significant step towards promoting gender equality. By highlighting these issues, the article contributes to the ongoing debate on gender and language, offering insights that could help reshape perceptions and encourage more inclusive language use in both formal and informal settings. This study aims to inform and influence future discussions on the intersection of language, gender, and social equality.

Keywords:

Portuguese language; Asymmetry; Linguistic sexism; Gender issues.