

SEXIST BIAS MANIFESTED IN THE LANGUAGE OF NURSERY RHYMES: ANALYSIS OF SEXIST LINGUISTIC FEATURES

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Abstract

Nursery Rhymes have been used for long time as a tool to make babies relax and sleep or even to help children at schools enjoy their time singing them. However, these rhymes are full of massive amount of language that is extremely sexist. The sexism of language comes because of the male's dominant voice and powerful image drawn through out the rhymes. In fact, there are some studies that are concerned with sexism in the language of fairy tales and other genres. However, studies on sexist linguistic features of nursery rhymes are rarely found. This article aims to present the different linguistic forms and patterns that help building up the sexist facets of the entire texts of the rhymes. For this purpose, a number of nursery rhymes featuring sexist has been selected and analyzed. The research has been conducted with the help of reviewing some principles of Critical Discourse Analysis and considering some feminist views. As a result, the ideologies that structure and underlie the linguistic expressions of the texts (nursery rhymes) have been uncovered.

Keywords: Nursery rhymes, sexism, Critical Discourse Analysis, feminist views, ideologies

1. Introduction and background

Language is often defined as a means of communication, which naturally implies that all categories and rules that make the language are to be taken for granted in order for the communicators to better communicate. In other words, coding a message needs full awareness of the acceptable cultural norms, worldwide knowledge, and linguistic contexts. Thus, it is very simple to produce linguistic expressions that conform the linguistic rules and patterns put in the language, however, there is no guarantee that the set of expressions coded in accordance with the rules of word order to meet the expected realization of language in reality. For instance, the sentence that goes as "My father is cooking right now." cannot match the realization of

language in reality for different reasons. Some of these are related to the expectations of the decoder or even to the knowledge agreed upon. The preceding example clarifies that the texts (sentences) are not merely made of categories that meet certain syntactic rules. The process of encoding includes ideological grounds as well as common knowledge.

Goddard and Patterson (2001: 6) indicate the idea that when we acquire a language, we acquire new ways of thinking. Such a view emphasizes the idea that coding and decoding the language is not merely a pure linguistic matter; it is social, cultural as well as ideological. Likewise, Woods (2005: 110) states that language is a means to organize experiences and perceptions, and it expresses cultural views.

Nursery Rhymes are conceptually structured on certain sexist ideological views. While reading or singing them, one might not perceive easily the amount of sexist bias integrated within the language of the rhymes. M.S. Haque and M.H. Khan (2004) explain that the bias is often unnoticed because it has been conventionalized and so conventions are rarely questioned. Hegemonic conventionalization usually occurs because of the "order of hegemony"- the process by which hegemonic power is naturalized in a society and subsequently becoming part of the social ideology. Based on Haque and Khan's explanation, it becomes clear that the hidden ideological messages sent via certain linguistic units normally reflect the viewpoints and norms of those who control such grouping.

Moreover, Gramsci (1971) notes that the power of dominant groups may be integrated in laws, rules, norms, habits, and even a quite consensus, and thus take the form called "hegemony". In the same manner, Essed (1991) has also remarked that the power is not always exercised in obviously abusive acts of dominant group members, but may be enacted in the myriad of taken-for-granted actions of every day life, as is typically the case in the many forms of every day sexism or racism. Spender adds that this is a language trap in which we are caught. We do not want to organize our world any other way; moreover, "it has been the dominant group- in this case, males- who have created the world, invented the categories, constructed sexism and its justification and developed a language trap which is in their interest" (1980: 142).

Children are the expected recipients of such texts, nursery rhymes, especially at school or even at home. Recipients tend to accept beliefs, knowledge, and opinions (unless they are inconsistent with their beliefs and experiences) through discourse from what they see as authoritative, trustworthy, or credible sources, such as scholars, experts, professionals, or reliable media (Nesler et al. 1993). However, being children, the recipients are less experienced to deal with such discourse, the nursery rhymes. Wodak (1987) adds that recipients may not have the knowledge and beliefs needed

to challenge the discourses or information they are exposed to. In addition, Clark (2002:292) has called on researchers of children's texts to pay greater attention to "nuances of expressions" and " a variety of voices" when reading gender in children's literature. In fact, this is a call to pay greater attention to covert markers of sexism manifested through the subtle use of language.

However, the whole idea of naturalization of discourse as Fairclough has recognized is related to the ideological common sense, which turns the ideology of the text to the ideological common senses. This new discourse as stated by Fairclough is more institutionalized instead of being the discourse of certain group (1989: 92). This, of course, affects the process of receiving and interpreting the messages intended within the discourse. Once received, the nursery rhymes are always interpreted by children as texts with ideological common sense, which leads to the acceptance of such hidden ideologies.

1.1 Sexism in Language

The term "sexism" refers to the existence of certain elements in a language that help expressing bias in favor of one sex on the other. Mostly, the bias is in favor of men and against women. In this case, women are viewed as subordinate because of their lack of power. On the other hand, men are always recognized in the center armed with power and superiority. Pertaining to the same issue, Kramarae and Treichler (1985), state that sexism, by definition, is a social relationship in which males have authority and power over females. This relationship includes "behavior, policy, language or other action of men or women which expresses the institutionalized, systematic, comprehensive or consistent view that women are inferior" (p.411). Graddol and Swann (1989:96) define sexism as any discrimination against women or men because of their sex, and made on irrelevant grounds. In a similar way, Cameron (1985:72) defines sexist language as language that contains a lexicon and a grammatical structure that excludes insults or trivializes women. For Bragin (1981), a statement is sexist if it creates, promotes, constitutes and exploits any irrelevant or impertinent marking of the distinction between the sexes.

The structure of language contributes to reinforcing this idea by conceptualizing the notion of man as a norm and the woman as deviant and subordinate. For example, the noun of feminine gender can only be obtained by adding a morpheme to the noun. The *hostess* as in table (1) is a noun of feminine gender. *Hostess* as a noun is a product of (root + suffix morpheme). The additions of suffix morphemes to the masculine roots in order to make up feminine nouns reflect the idea of woman's subordination as compared to man as a norm.

Table1. Morphological indicators of masculine and feminine nouns

(Norm) Male	(Deviation) Female
host	hostess
manager	manageress
doctor	woman doctor

Vardell (1985) researches the ways in which the English language discriminates between the two-sexes as in pronouns; the generic use of man as a male referent, descriptions of women based on their physical appearance rather than their individual accomplishments, and other areas. Lakoff agrees with Vardell on the negative image of woman drawn by the linguistic representations of English language. Lakoff (1987) claims that women experience linguistic discriminations not only in the way they are taught to use language, but also in the way general language treats them. Female words are often negative, converging frailty and a sense of subordination as well as immaturity. The words associated with women generally undergo a process of semantic derogation. When the sexist language is accepted as part of our everyday interaction, the subjugation of women becomes ritualized in daily discourse. Additionally, Sheldon (1990: 4) says about the English language: "our language reflects sexist, male-centered attitudes that perpetuate trivialization, marginalization, and invisibility of female experience". In *The Feminist Critique of Language*, Cameron (1990) suggests that language:

could be seen as a reflection of sexist culture; or... it could be seen as a carrier of ideas and assumptions which become, through their constant re-enactment in discourse, so familiar and conventional we miss their significance.... Thus, sexism is not merely reflected, but acted out and thus reinforced in a thousand banal encounters. (p.14)

Spender also claims that males have had far more power in society, and this has included the power to enforce their view of the world. She, moreover, remarks that there is sexism in language, it does enhance the position of males, and males have had control over the production of cultural forms (1985:144). On the image of man in language is that the English language as a set of symbols "represents man's image of himself and of ourselves and the world as his creation" (Kramarae& Treichler 1985: 225).

1.2 Ideology

Ideology as a term has to do with the reality and the redefinition of reality from certain perspectives. Thus, the conflict might appear while considering the making of subjective reality (certain group's beliefs and categorizations) and the objective reality (the representation of reality as it is from a neutral perspective). The conflict might take a further step if the subjective reality is extended to represent the objective one. According to

Gee (1999:2) "when we speak or write, we always take a particular perspective on what the world is like". However, Bucholtz (2003: 57) defines ideology as a social belief system that is so rarely questioned that it becomes a part of the shared practices that guide our everyday existence. According to this definition, it can be clear that the dominant group in the society forces the idealization of these beliefs that have even become unquestionable. Moreover, one might think they are unquestionable because they are considered as social norms. Fairclough (1992:87) defines ideologies in the following way:

(They are) significations/ constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities) which are built into various dimensions of the forms/ meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, representation, or trans-formation of relations of domination.

Fairclough (1989:7) also remarks, "conventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere 'common sense' and which contribute to sustaining existing power relations". Ideologies, which are natural and habitualized in the community, become a basis for background knowledge that will be activated in an appropriate time and place. Moreover, Fairclough (1989) has introduced the term member's resources (MR) when demonstrating knowledge that is activated in an interaction. This term was defined by Fairclough as something "which people have in their heads and draw when they produce or interpret texts-including their knowledge of language, representation of the natural and social worlds they inhabit values, beliefs, assumptions and so on" (p.24).

The ideological structure embedded within the text is materialized in the linguistic features of the text on all levels: lexical, grammatical as well as syntactic. The fact is that the linguistic choices at any level indicate specific ideological reference and significance. In other words, the discourse is a mirror of the ideological system because the linguistic choices in the discourse are socially and ideologically determined. Therefore, the linguistic analysis of the nursery rhymes in this research will be with certain focal points aiming to reveal some aspects of sexism in language that help reinforce the ideology of woman as a subordinate being.

1.3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

For long time, there has been a great need for a technique by which a language might be analyzed in a way that leads to uncover the linguistic properties within a text that help out empowering the inequalities based on race, social class or sex among people in a society. Critical Discourse Analysis is a research approach that looks at the "impact of the systematic

choices of particular language items or grammatical construction within a text" and, as such, offers an ideal exploratory platform for a study on language and gender (Mills, 2004: 119). Van Dijk (2001: 95-114) states that within discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis adopts the most explicitly political stance through its deliberate goal of addressing inequalities in society.

According to Wodak (2001:2), Critical Discourse Analysis "critically" takes a stand against injustice "as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use". Critical Discourse Analysis is a necessity to describe the ideological ground on which the text is based. In this regard, Fowler (1991:89) stresses that by applying suitable linguistic tools, CDA aims to reveal ideology that is normally hidden through the habitualization of discourse.

Feminists argue that women are largely subjected to stereotyping, and this recurring practice in mainstream discourse renders women powerless. Therefore, examining stereotyping practices involves examining power relations between males and females in society. Critical Discourse Analysis defines social power in terms of control and assumes that those with power "control the acts and minds" of those who lack power (van Dijk, 2003:354). According to this, CDA is best functioning where power is activated within the text. Such power is hidden within the selected linguistic features that reinforce the stereotyping as well as help building up the common sense. The common sense normally leads the receiver to decode the messages that give power to certain group on the other as if they were neutral ones. In the same manner, Fairclough (2001:197) remarks that a desired outcome of CDA is to create "critical consciousness" so that those most affected by injustice and those who are in a position to address injustice may contribute to more effectively "shaping and reshaping" their environment.

2. Diagnostic Analysis

2.1 Objectives and scope of the analysis

The sexist bias that the language of the nursery rhymes expresses is thoroughly investigated and highlighted during the discussion. Certain aspects of sexist bias have been selected. Some of the aspects that will be further examined are the encoding of male worldview, the inequality of power (male dominance), and the invisibility of woman.

2.2 Methodology

The linguistic analysis carried out in this research is mainly based on certain feminist views and some principles of critical discourse analysis. These criteria help examining the linguistic entities of the texts, which lead to uncover the ideologies lying behind these texts.

2.3 Corpus

For this purpose, a number of nursery rhymes cited in THE OXFORD NURSERY RHYME BOOK has been selected to be the textual sources for analyzing the sexist linguistic features which help building up biased language.

2.4 Analysis

2.4.1 The encoding of male worldview

The description of reality from certain viewpoint features the linguistic units of the entire texts of nursery rhymes. In fact, the selection of certain linguistic units is normally affected by the viewpoint and ideology of the text producer. Not only is the selection of these linguistic units affected, but also the way they are arranged. The encoding of male worldview, without any doubt, finds its way in the nursery rhymes. The female appears as a dependent being and a fellow. Moreover, she is unable to contribute to the family economy. Furthermore, she is presented as an ideal person only in domestic work.

The female in the nursery rhyme is often described from the male point of view. The following text helps indicate the idea of woman as a helpless being unable to manage the duties of every day life:

The old Woman in a Shoe

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe (1)
She had so many children she did not know what to do;
She gave them some broth without any bread;
She whipped them all soundly and put them to bed.

The female described in text (1) is in misery. As the story on a woman under such conditions is narrated in this rhyme, one might consider it as a common sense. While considering the language that makes text (1) from a feminist point of view, it seems clear that the woman is even unable to carry out the reductive activities that she is socially expected to do without any problem. Additionally, the image of woman drawn in text (1) is critical because it gives a sample of a woman unable to manage the economic side of life with the absence of male. The repetition of negation in text (1) increases the darkness of the female image. The following examples noted in text (1) are illustrative: *did not know* and *without any bread*. Thus, the reductive view towards a woman, as in text (1), helps perpetuating the limited abilities of females. In effect, such limitation leads into narrowing her role in various aspects of life.

However, the image of woman living in a shoe as stated in example (1) provokes the reader to think about the real status of woman in at least the factious world. The rhymes, indeed, are recording social values that are viewed either subjectively or objectively. In fact, the subjective reality that

reflects particular views about women is mainly tailored by a male dominated world. This explains the reductive features by which the women are mostly characterized and identified.

The idea of the female's secondary role of production within the entire family life seems to be clear in the following text taken from a rhyme titled Sing Lullaby:

(2-A) Hush thee, my babby,
Lie still with thy daddy
Thy mammy has gone to the mill,
To grind thee some wheat
To make thee some meat
So hush-a-bye, babby, lie stil

Such a secondary role given to the female reinforces the idea that a female is unable to take the major role in life, which is the economic one. This productive role features risky since it is mostly carried out outdoor. Critical discourse analysis has had it as one of its principles to investigate the language that supports the creation of differences among members of society on different bases: race, sex, and social class. The female -from the point of view of the male dominated society- is expected to be at home caring about children. Typically, this image has been materialized in text (2-A) through the intensive use of VPs like *to grind wheat* and *to make meat*, which have been feminized not only within the entire text, but also throughout the nursery rhymes.

Moreover, stereotyping and promoting the image of female as a person with reproductive economic role helps reinforcing the dominance of males since males are with more authority in taking economic family decisions. In a male dominated society, the females cannot be accepted to be with productive roles. Females' increasing productive roles threaten the stability of males' status and degree of control.

The following text cited within the same rhyme, Sing Lullaby, further shows the image of male as the one who is able to meet the economic needs of the family.

(2-B) Papa's going to buy you a mocking bird.

If the mocking bird won't sing, Papa's going to buy you a diamond ring.

If the diamond ring turns to brass, Papa's going to buy you a looking-glass.

As it appears, the two images drawn for the male and female within text (2-A) and (2-B) extracted from the same nursery rhyme are deeply integrated with gender bias. The bias has been linguistically constructed through limiting the role of the female as well as the male. Certain lexical items are repeated both in text (2-A) and (2-B) as:

A-Motion 1: mammy → going to the mill → to grind some wheat → to make some meat

B-Motion 2: papa → going to buy a mocking bird → going to buy a diamond ring → going to buy a looking glass

Such repetition creates in the mind of the text receiver real expectations of the size of difficulty each doer might encounter while carrying out the action. It also emphasizes the concept of father as the one who controls the economic affairs of the family for his ability to gain money, buy certain things, and refuse to buy other things. On the other hand, the mother, as most nursery rhymes present, keeps home, does work that requires no degree of risk and has no access to buy or sell.

The domestic work is portrayed in most nursery rhymes as the work that is only carried out by a female. The idea cannot even stop here; the rhymes promote the assumption that the female is a model in this field. At the same time, the male is busy with public work. The domestic work including washing, cooking, milking and caring about children is mostly done at home while the public work outside. The binary opposition built within the entire texts of nursery rhymes stresses the division made between the male and the female based on the type of work done by each, be it domestic or public. This supports Crabb and Bielawski's (1994) findings. Their findings show that the norm for males was to be identified with the outdoors, away from the confinement of home and family.

The domestic work is associated with the idea of confinement and limitation of experience since the female does not move any step outside home. In fact, the portrayal of the female with biological weakness is intended to determine her gender role as the one in charge of nursing children, cooking, or even cleaning. The biological basis for the differences between females and males hides certain ideological implications, such as the female is determined to take such role and so the domestic work is by nature feminine. Thus, the females are biologically, but not socially confined. The brilliant way of building up certain images of the female as the best creature on earth to nurture children, cook, wash, iron or even bake reinforces the trend that the female is confined at home either by her choice or by her limited biological abilities.

2.4.2 The inequality of power (male dominance)

Studying the textual elements that lead into building up the inequality of power between genders is a basic pillar in critical discourse analysis as well as in feminist discourse analysis. The textual elements within the entire texts of nursery rhymes function in different directions to build up certain images of the practice of power of one gender on the other. The nursery

rhymes are rich with images portraying the female as an object owned by the male, the female as a sex being, and as a weak one.

Some nursery rhymes help developing the idea that the female is an object- like in a sense that she is viewed as something that can be gotten or something that is similar to other objects. The following text, which is part of a nursery rhyme, titled *THE BACHELOR'S LAMENT* helps clarifying the idea:

WHEN I was a little boy (3)
I lived by myself,
And all the bread and cheese I got
I laid upon a shelf
The rats and the mice
They made such a strife
I had to go to London town
And get me a wife.

The lines in text (3) stress the idea that the male is in need to the female to tidy the strife. Though it is indirectly mentioned, a reader can conclude that the male is unable to do the housework that causes him to go to London to get married and have a wife. Thus, the need for a wife is a result of the strife made by the rats and the mice. In fact, the need for her is not because she is a being, but because she can do certain work, which is cleaning. The textual evidence that reinforces the idea of considering the female as an object within text (3) is that the speaker has said *get me a wife*. The verb *get* normally collocates in language with inanimate more than animate beings. It is expected to be *And get married* not *And get me a wife*.

Additionally, this rhyme in example (3) perpetuates the expected and accepted relation between a husband and a wife in a male dominated society. This relation is based on considering the husband as a master and the wife as a slave. This view reflects the male oriented mentality of the superiority of male and the subordination of female. The superiority is represented in example (3) by the ability of male to own a female.

In addition, the following text taken from a rhyme called *OVER THE WATER TO CHARLIE* stresses the idea of the female as an object owned by the male. See the following:

Charlie loves good ale and wine, (4)
And Charlie loves good brandy,
And Charlie loves a pretty girl
As sweet as sugar candy.

It is so obvious that the relation built in text (4) between the complements of VPs in each conjoined clause requires deep syntactic as well as semantic analysis:

Clause 1: NP VP NP1 and (Conjunction) NP2

Clause 2: NP VP NP3

Clause 3: NP VP NP4

The clauses are parallel with similar NPs complements:

Clause 1:NP1 (Complement) inanimate+ NP2 (Complement)
inanimate

Clause 2:NP3 (Complement) inanimate

Clause 3:NP4 (Complement) animate

As it appears, the syntactic structure of these three sequential lines in text (4) is based on conjoining the clauses that include similar NPs (Subjects), VPs (Predicators), but different NPs (Direct Objects). Keeping this in mind, the NPs (Direct Objects) within the conjoined clauses happen to be as the following:

NP 1+ NP2 (Direct Objects\good ale and wine) in clause 1

(Equal) =

NP3 (Direct Object\ good brandy) in clause 2

(Equal) =

NP4 (Direct Object\ good girl) in clause 3

The inanimate Direct Objects are all conjoined to animate Direct Object, which is a *pretty girl*. Semantically, the combination of NPs can happen if they belong to the same class. Logically speaking, *a pretty girl* as Direct Object is conjoined with other items Direct Objects mentioned in the preceding clauses since it is similar to them. This comes as a proof to the idea that the female is considered as equal as *the wine* and *brandy*, which leads into trivializing her as a being. The critical discourse analysis helps revealing such trivialization by offering a linguistic analysis that leads into such conclusion. In addition, the last line in text (4) has added a new block in this direction by assimilating *the pretty girl* to an inanimate object, which is *sugar candy*. This metaphorical assimilation grows in the minds of the listeners or readers different connotations, such as a pretty girl equals sugar candy in that both are with sweet flavor. In addition, they are easily melted and vanished. These connoted ideas produced by such a simile support the idea of trivializing the female. Adding to that, the idea of the sweetness of female has been commonly feminized.

Describing the female as a sex being seems to be an integral part of some nursery rhymes. The female is no longer able to be an intellectual being; instead, she is either owned by others or kissed, or even hugged by the male. Such images drawn about the female in nursery rhymes stereotype the idea of her as a subordinate in relation to the male as a super ordinate. The dilemma is on the way of presenting the female. In effect, the language stresses the idea of presenting common sense, which in reality underlies certain critical ideologies. These ideologies are related to the presentation of the physical appearance and the beauty of the female. Thus, these items help

identifying the female as a person. The problem cannot stop here; however, it is clear that the attitude of males towards females is one of the focal points in most rhymes. The following example taken from a nursery rhyme called *Proposals* might explain more:

(5-A) Says the little girl to the little boy, What shall we do?
Says the little boy to the little girl, I will kiss you.

As the male's response to female's question in text (5-A) is going on, it seems that the female is only thought of as an attractive being created to satisfy the male's physical needs. As recognized in the nursery rhymes, the common sense that the male always initiates the act of kissing is what characterizes the masculine nature. On the other hand, the male as masculine appears to be with less attractiveness while the female as feminine appears to be with more attractiveness.

In fact, the feminine beauty is the source of female's weakness. In most rhymes including this one in example (5-A), the beauty of female is naturally compared with male's achievements. Such a comparison leads into generating certain social values and beliefs that identify a female as a being with no real productive achievements. On the other hand, the male is the only being that can make decisions and select. In example (5-A), the one who has taken the decision to kiss is, in fact, the male.

The attribute of the female's being attractive is counted as a disadvantage while the attribute of the male's being unattractive is counted as an advantage. This explains the much amount of focus on the beauty of the female as a source of inequality. This beauty has created a sense of distinction between males and females. Most rhymes place high importance on detailing the physical appearance of the female and highlighting the achievement of the male. Additionally, the lines in text (5-B) taken from a nursery rhyme titled *Proposals* complicate the whole scene by including certain sexual connotations: I PEEPED through the window, (5-B) I peeped through the door,

I saw pretty Katie
A-dancing on the floor.
I cuddled her and fondled her,
I set her on my knee;
I says, Pretty Katie,
Won't you marry me?

The scene shown in text (5-B) reveals the high amount of male's initiation of action on one hand, and the passiveness of female on the other hand. It is also of high importance to refer to the voice of male and the silence of female when the issue is related to the sexual act. The response of the female as text (5-B) indicates has not been heard. The only explanation for this is that the focal point of the discourse here is the acts performed by

the male. Indeed, it appears as a common sense that the male is the one who is socially accepted to express desire. Based on text (5-B), the number of times that the female appears as an initiator of an action is not more than one time while the male appears as an initiator of more than five times. The VPs used within the clauses in text (5-B) also mirror the type of attitude that the male has towards the female. The following pattern can be explanatory:

I cuddled her → I fondled her → I set her on my knee → I says, Pretty...

The attitude of the male towards the female is based on considering her no more than a sex being that has to respond to his desires. This, from the point of view of Critical Discourse Analysis is a trend towards reducing the female's role. Instead of picturing her as a passive being accepting without rejecting or even responding without initiating, she, from a feminist perspective, should have been pictured as equal as the male in both responding and initiating.

This phenomenon, a female as a sex being, has been cited in different nursery rhymes. The repetition of the acts of hugging, kissing and taking on one's knee has been featuring a number of nursery rhymes that handle the theme of love and marriage. Thus, it is clear that the male's view has been embodied through certain lexical items that describe his relation with the female. This relation is never equal, however, it is a type of relation that links a dominant figure (male) with a dominated one (female).

2.4.3 The invisibility of woman

The woman is invisible in nursery rhymes. Different linguistic and non-linguistic techniques have been used to hide the real identity of the female from the scene. Verbs have been used to report on the unconstructiveness of women's speech. Moreover, trivializing the female is materialized by focusing on her as a being with no achievement compared to the male. Furthermore, silencing her appears clear in most nursery rhymes by hiding her real experience in life.

The verbs that have been used to report on the speech of women contribute to reinforcing the negative features of female stereotypes. As both texts (6) and (7) illustrate, verbs describing women's speech like *gossiped*, *could never agree*, *could not speak plain*, *cried* construct the entire structure of texts in such nursery rhymes. In other words, these verbs have not been marginalized; instead, they have been the focus of these rhymes. The following rhymes are illustrative:

THE GOSSIPS

Miss One, Two, and Three (6)
 Could never agree,
 While they gossiped around
 A tea-caddy.

The Girl in the Lane

THE girl in the lane, (7)
That couldn't speak plain,
Cried, Gobble, gobble, gobble.
The man on the hill,
That couldn't stand still,
Went hobble, hobble, hobble.

Being the basic elements within the entire linguistic structure of texts (6) and (7), these verbs help building up the stereotype of women's speech. In effect, the centrality and the negativity of the description of women's speech stress the negative image of woman drawn within the lines of most nursery rhymes.

Building up the invisibility of woman within the texts of nursery rhymes is also accomplished through trivializing the woman by describing her as a being with no achievement. The issue is further complicated by comparing her to a man of achievement. The following example can help explaining the sexist bias which is based on achievement:

SAM, THE SPORTSMAN

THERE was a little man, and he had a little gun, (8)
And his bullets were made of lead, lead, lead;
He went to the brook, and shot a little duck,
Right through the middle of the head, head, head
He carried it home to his old wife Joan,
And bade her a fire for to make, make, make,
To roast the little duck he had shot in the brook,
And he'd go and fetch her the drake, drake, drake.

Celebrating male's achievement is the central idea presented in text (8). However, the order of events in text (8) explains the idea that the real achievement is made by the man. The action verbs that appear in text (8), such as *shot* and *carried* express the man's efforts in making available the material that the wife is going to roast.

As it appears, the sense of achievement is normally associated with masculinity rather than femininity. This sense has been celebrated in a large number of nursery rhymes, which helps constructing the so-called common sense. Most nursery rhymes present only males as hunters, butchers, sailors and builders. On the other side, females are mostly presented as homemakers, sewers or maidens.

Since the nursery rhymes are presented from the male's viewpoint, it is rarely to sense the real experience of the female. The male intentionally hides her real experience. By this, the male maintains his superiority and power. Indeed, the woman is largely presented as with no reason or even with no physical power. Additionally, she is determined to be only able to do

domestic work, or even able to nurse children. Engel (1981: 649) indicates that children's literature presents "a limited view of women's real activities, whereas the roles of male characters were shown closer to reality". However, she is never ever presented as an adventurous person with high deeds. As a result, the marginalization of the female is achieved. To cite some examples where the female is presented from the male's perspective, let us assess the following text:

2.5 Conclusion

Sexism in language of nursery rhymes is the outcome of implied ideological beliefs in gender stereotypes. The sexist linguistic aspects that are encoded within the language of these rhymes are mainly resulted from the encoding of reality from a male point of view. Thus, the language of rhymes, as presented in this research, shows the superiority of male on female. In fact, the superiority of one gender on the other is linguistically expressed through attributing certain linguistic units to either males or females. The research also reveals the sense of inequality, in these rhymes, perpetuated in the ideas of masculine power practiced on females. Furthermore, the sexist aspects of the language used in these rhymes contribute to hiding real female's experiences.

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