

Gender-Exclusive and Gender-Preferential Speech Forms in the Yorùbá Language

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Abstract: That there are differences between male and female speech forms has been well established in the literature. The differences in speech are sometimes as a result of the emphasis that each gender places on different aspects of the community's culture or which the community requires that each gender places on different aspects of its culture. This paper examines gender-exclusive speech forms in the Yorùbá language alongside gender-preferential speech features with a view to highlight the greater emphasis that Yorùbá women place or are expected to place on certain aspects of the Yorùbá culture.

Ethnographic method was used for data elicitation. Structured interviews were conducted with 30 purposively selected respondents in selected communities in Kwara, Lagos and Oyo States of Nigeria while participant observation at different periods in these communities between 1983 and 2018 also yielded useful data.

A highly significant number of female respondents (93.0%) address their spouses' younger siblings with honourific pronouns regardless of such siblings' ages contrariwise for all male respondents (0.0%). The use of certain expressions by the majority of married Yorùbá women (93.0%) to show deference to husbands' relatives who are not older than them, with no corresponding overwhelming use of similar expressions by male respondents (66.7%), not only ironically shows a sharp deviation from the Yorùbá culture which the society embraces, but also, the highly hierarchical nature of the Yorùbá society in which marriage often confers a superior status on the majority of husbands' relatives.

The study shows that gender-exclusive and gender-preferential speech forms are deep-rooted aspects of the Yorùbá culture and that gendered speech style is just, but a means of expressing aspects of that culture.

Keywords: gender-exclusion, gender-preference, Yorùbá culture, politeness, speech form

1. Introduction

The Yorùbá people of South-western Nigeria can be found in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun,

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Ondo and Ekiti states. They are equally the majority ethnic group in Kwara State (North-central, Nigeria) and one of the major ethnic groups in Kogi State (North-central Nigeria). The ethnic group's name, Yorùbá, is also the name by which its language is known i.e. the Yorùbá language. Like most speech communities, Yorùbá women's linguistic forms are sometimes different from those of their men, and when women do not conform with the speech forms of their gender on such occasions, their femininity and politeness could be questioned. According to Holmes (2008), the linguistic behaviour of women and men differs. As women and men do not speak in exactly the same way as each other in any community, Holmes further makes a distinction between communities in which gender-exclusivity in speech is highly structured and those in which it is less structured.

A number of studies have been carried out on the relationship between gender and the Yorùbá language. Some of these include Yusuf (1989, 2002), Balogun (2010), Adetunji (2010) and Ojoade (1983). Yusuf (2002) examines sexism in the English and the Yorùbá languages by bringing to the fore, the ways in which the structures of both languages engender sexism. It equally looks at the non-sexist aspects of both languages. Balogun (2010) pays attention to the relationship between proverbs and the oppression of women and more specifically, how Yorùbá proverbs portray and stereotype women. Like Balogun, Adetunji (2010) describes the use of sexist proverbs in Yorùbá as acts of linguistic violence because it runs contrary to the idea of the equality of gender. In spite of all these however, there has been a dearth of studies on gender-exclusive and gender-preferential speech patterns among the Yorùbá people.

The choice of gender-exclusive and gender-preferential speech patterns for the present study is hinged on the fact that participant observation by the researcher as an active member of the Yorùbá speech community for some decades has shown that most of these gendered-speech forms basically require a greater degree of politeness from women with no corresponding requirement in terms of speech forms from men. It is also imperative to note that it is actually women who are the agents of transmission of these gendered-speech forms as they are often the ones who ensure their continued perpetration. It therefore becomes needful to have these exclusive speech forms documented.

2. Gender-exclusive speech forms in different communities

The issue of exclusivity in gendered-speech has been discussed along different dimensions. An exclusive speech feature, according to Meyerhoff (2011), is one associated solely with a particular user or group of users or solely with a particular context. Meyerhoff presents the example of Vaupes as one region where it seems that women and men in a community "do" use different languages. Vaupes is an area on and around the borders

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between Columbia, Peru and Brazil. The Vaupes is an area of great linguistic diversity in which there is a tradition of marrying outside one's father's home language group. Women who move to new villages when they get married maintain their first language, and children usually grow up knowing both their mothers' and fathers' languages. In the past, it was customary for the people of Vaupes to speak their father's language to their father and his relatives, and their mother's language to their mother and her family.

There are therefore, cases of highly structured communities in which women and men speak different languages. Although such cases are rare, they nonetheless provide extreme examples of sex-exclusive language differences. According to Holmes (2008), among the Amazon Indians, the language used by a child's mother is different from her father's language, because men must marry outside their tribe and each tribe is distinguished by a different language. In any longhouse therefore, and indeed in the entire community, women and men speak different languages. This pattern of language maintenance and multilingualism Meyerhoff opines served a number of useful social functions, including being a good indicator of a person's lineage.

A greater number of gender-exclusivity in speech are however less dramatic than the two elicited above and as a result, are termed as instances of less structured speech exclusivity. According to Holmes (2008:158) "there are communities where the language is shared by men and women, but particular linguistic features occur only in the women's speech or only in men's speech. These features are usually small differences in pronunciation or word shape (Morphology)". In Montana for example, there are pronunciation differences in the Gros Ventre American Indian tribe where the women say [kja'tsa] for 'bread', the men say [dʒa'tsa]. In this community, if a person uses the wrong form for their gender, the older members of the community may consider them bisexual. Also in Bengali, a language spoken in India, the women use an initial [l] where the men use an initial [n] in some words.

Aikhenvald (2002:27) reports that among the Tariana in the Vaupes, people who have lost their fathers' language are referred to as "those who speak a borrowed language". In Tariana, they are described as na-sawaya na-saupe literally meaning "they borrow, they speak". In Yana, an extinct Hokan language of Northern California in the United States of America, some of the words used between men are longer than the equivalent words used by women to women, because the men's forms sometimes add a suffix as shown in the following examples:

Yana		
Female form	Male form	Gloss
<i>ba</i>	<i>ba-na</i>	deer
<i>yaa</i>	<i>yaa-na</i>	person

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<i>ʔau</i>	<i>ʔau-na</i>	fire
<i>Nisaaklu</i>	<i>nisaaklu-ʔi</i>	he might go away

(Holmes, 2008:158).

Also, in traditional and conservative Japanese, Holmes (2008) states that forms of nouns considered appropriate for women are frequently prefixed by *o-*, a marker of polite form or formal style thus, making Japanese one of those languages in which there are differences in the vocabulary items used by women and men as the following examples indicate:

Japanese:

Female form	Male form	Gloss
<i>otoosan</i>	<i>oyaji</i>	father
<i>onaka</i>	<i>hara</i>	stomach
<i>oishii</i>	<i>umai</i>	delicious
<i>taberu</i>	<i>kuu</i>	eat
<i>atashi/watashi/watakushi</i>	<i>ore/ boku</i>	I

In Japanese, *atashi* and *watashi* are traditionally the more formal variants and as seen in the examples, they are expected to be used by women while the most formal form, *watakushi*, is equally expected to be used by women. Contrariwise, *ore* and *boku* which are the casual forms (with the latter being more casual than the former) are male forms.

According to Meyerhoff (2011), in Muskogean, a language spoken in Louisiana and Texas in the United States of America, this unusual speech form has also been noted by researchers. For example, the Muskogean word *iisks* which means ‘you are saying’ is rendered as *iisk* by the female.

The morphology of verbs in the Dravidian language of Kurux also provides some information about both the speaker and the addressee. The reason is that in Kurux, the words *barday* and *barckay* which mean ‘you come’ and ‘you came’ respectively can only be used by a male addressee while *bardin* and *barckin* which also mean ‘you come’ and ‘you came’ respectively can only be used by a female speaker to a female addressee. Similarly, *bardi* and *barcki* which mean ‘you come’ and ‘you came’ respectively can only be used by a male speaker to a female addressee. Meyerhoff further states that these differences might cause women’s and men’s speech to sound very different to a casual observer but it would be a mistake to say they speak different languages, even though such claims have been made in the literature. From all these examples, it therefore becomes obvious that gender exclusiveness in speech takes different forms in different languages and in consonance with Meyerhoff (2011), they also say a lot about a much wider range of social dynamics in the community.

3. The study areas: Kwara, Lagos and Oyo states

Kwara, a state in the North-central geo-political zone of Nigeria, has as its capital, the city of Ilorin. For the purpose of this study, a total of ten respondents were chosen from Ilorin and this comprises five males and five females.

Lagos, a state in the South-western geo-political zone of Nigeria, is also often referred to as the city of Lagos. Ten respondents were selected from Egbeda, a suburb of Lagos with equal representation of both genders.

Oyo State, which is also in the South-western geo-political zone of Nigeria, was equally used as a study site for this study. From the town of Ogbomoso were chosen five male and five female respondents who in addition to the respondents from Kwara State (Ilorin) and Lagos State (Egbeda) make a total of thirty respondents.

All chosen respondents are not only Yorùbá people by ethnicity, they also have sufficient knowledge of the Yorùbá language and culture. Interviews for the study were conducted between September and November, 2018.

4. Methodology: qualitative research method

The classical methods applied in field research are primarily classified as qualitative research methods (Korth, 2005). Qualitative research method is concerned with structures and patterns and how something is. Qualitative research method is considered more appropriate for this study as a result of the unreliability of the questionnaire as a survey tool for ethnographic studies.

In collecting data for this study, two research instruments were used. They are: interview and participant observation. These research instruments are considered by the researcher to be mutually helpful in realising the focus of the paper. The interview is considered an important instrument for eliciting data for this study because of the alignment of this paper with the opinion of Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:107) who view interviews as accounts which are not just a representation of respondents' social world, but describe such accounts as "part of the world they describe". Korth (2001) further adds that such narratives are not only seen as representing experiences, but also as contributing to the construction of those experiences.

The type of interview used in this study is the structured interview. The choice of this type of interview is premised on the fact that it ensures the neutrality of the interviewer or moderator through the eradication of leading and ambiguous questions and through the standardisation of their delivery. The structured interview adopted for this study contains pre-scripted questions which helped to ensure that both the order and the wording used are the same on each and every occasion. Despite such pre-scripted ordering of questions, interviewees were asked follow up questions where considered necessary. Such follow up questions helped to complete or clarify answers provided to the main (pre-scripted)

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questions where sufficient detail was lacking.

For this study, a total of 30 respondents across different age groups, social strata, states and gender were interviewed. The informal nature with which the interviews were conducted helped in eliciting responses that were personal to the respondents. It is important to add that all the interviews were conducted in the Yorùbá language so as to enable the interviewer capture accurate perceptions of all respondents.

It is pertinent to note that, while thoughts and emotions can be inferred on, the third element of attitude which is response, cannot be captured by interviewing or testing, but must be observed as it occurs naturally (Korth, 2005). This informs our decision to complement data obtained through interviews with those gathered through participant observation.

Participant observation as a method of data collection “is based on the idea that one has to participate in the world surrounding one in order to understand it, rather than just observe it” (Korth, 2005:55). The method has its origins in cultural anthropology (Malinowski, 1922) and requires long term immersion in the community under study. It allows the researcher to take part in the everyday life and activities of the community being investigated without interfering (Silverman, 2001). Hence, it is a necessary complement of interview in any field research. Participant observation is deemed very crucial for this study because it offers the researcher the opportunity to see if there is really a correspondence between the claims made by respondents claimed in the interviews and the ones they actually manifest in their daily lives. The researcher’s membership of the research communities at different points in the last three and half decades provided the ideal atmosphere for observing naturally-occurring conversations which came in handy in the course of this research.

5. Gender-exclusive speech forms in the Yorùbá language

Speech forms that reliably index speaker’s sex are not commonplace in the Yorùbá language. This does not however mean that they do not exist at all or that the rare ones that do exist should be left undocumented. Female exclusive speech forms in Yorùbá to a very large extent mirror the specific values that Yorùbá women are expected to possess. As a result, a good number of these female exclusive speech forms are marriage-oriented thereby, suggesting that Yorùbá women, like their peers in many climes, are expected to play vital roles in the success of marriages.

Specifically as shall later be seen in this section, the majority of these female-exclusive speech forms are those with which women address or are expected to address their in-laws. This corroborates Holmes (2008) who states that gender differences in language are often just one aspect of more pervasive linguistic differences in the society reflecting social

status or power differences. If a community is very hierarchical, for instance, and within each level of the hierarchy, men are more powerful than women, then linguistic differences between the speech of women and men may be just one dimension of more extensive differences reflecting the social hierarchy as a whole.

In the case of the Yorùbá language, apart from the fact that spouses are generally expected to respect their parents-in-law and other older members of their spouses' families, the patriarchal nature of the Yorùbá society also makes many wives address other in-laws who are not necessarily superior to them in age or social status with respect and politeness. For the purpose of this study, the following are such gendered speech forms in the Yorùbá language alongside their discussions:

(1) The use of honorific pronouns for husbands' relatives: Honorific pronouns such as *e/èyin* (second person singular honourific pronoun) used in nominative case, *yín* (second person singular honourific pronoun) used in accusative case, *àwọn* (third person singular honourific pronoun) used in nominative case, *wón* (third person singular honourific pronoun) used in nominative case and *wọn* (third person singular honourific pronoun) used in accusative case in Yorùbá are plural pronouns generally used by both male and female to address someone that is either superior in age or social status.

According to Abiodun (1992), it is a situation in which plural pronouns are used to refer to a single entity. For example, the Yorùbá language unlike English, does not distinguish between gender nouns and pronouns. The language, however, makes age and status-based distinctions which dictates that honorific pronouns be used for older people or those that are socially superior. Literally, it amounts to using a pronoun which would ordinarily be used for more than one person for one person to signal that the addressee is superior either in age and or social status to the speaker. In this instance, the honorific pronoun is used for the same purpose by both male and female.

Parents-in-law in the Yoruba culture are generally expected to be respected by their children's spouses and as such, are addressed with the use of honorific pronouns by both genders. From the interviews for example, all male and female respondents claimed they address their parents-in-law with honour and respect by using such address forms as *e/èyin* (second person singular pronoun), *yín* (you), sir and ma. A similar pattern was recorded when respondents were asked of how they address their spouses' older siblings.

Apart from these instances however, the majority of married Yorùbá women also use honourific pronouns for other husband's relatives apart from the parents-in-law and older members of their husbands' families. Hence, women often use honorific pronouns for their husbands' younger siblings even when such women are superior in age and or social status to such people. For example, fourteen of the fifteen female respondents (93.3%) interviewed, claimed that they use honourific pronouns to address their husband's younger

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siblings despite being older than such siblings while only one female respondent (6.7%) claimed that she makes no use of honorific pronouns while addressing siblings of her husband that are younger than her. Contrariwise, all male respondents (100.0%) said they make no use of honorific pronouns while addressing their spouses' younger siblings.

Participant observation also showed that, a lot of married Yorùbá women extend the use of honourific pronouns to other younger relatives of their husbands apart from their husbands' siblings. The corresponding use of honorific pronouns by men for people of lower age or social status from their wives' families is not an attribute that characterizes male speech. Hence, such usages do not dominate men's speech style and are therefore, considered exclusive to women's speech.

(2) The attachment of epithets to husbands' younger relatives' names: Similar to the point above is the fact that the majority of married Yorùbá women do not call their husbands' relatives just by their first names. Generally, in the Yorùbá society, people call older siblings, uncles and aunts or those in the same age group as these people by the epithets; *Ánti* (Aunty) or *Bódà* (Brother). Sometimes, these epithets are added before such persons' names for example, *Ánti Nike* or *Bódà Kola* to show respect. These forms are used by both men and women as such.

However, it is also often the case that even when the husband's relative is younger than the woman, the woman cannot just call such a relative by his/her first name as this is considered disrespectful, but by adding these epithets to their names. For example, of the fifteen female interviewees, twelve (80.0%) claimed that they call their husbands' younger siblings by either adding epithets to their names and or by calling those who have children mostly by their children's names e.g. *Iya Tinuke*, *Daddy Ibrahim*, *Mummy Gbolahan*, *Baba Lola* etc. One female respondent (6.7%) claimed that she calls her husband's younger siblings by their names because her relationship with her husband's siblings pre-dated her relationship and eventual marriage to her husband.

When male respondents were asked the same question, eleven of them (73.3%) claimed they call their spouses' younger siblings who have children mostly by their children's names while the remaining four (26.7%) claimed they still call their spouses' siblings by their names despite the fact that they have become parents. More interesting is the fact that, all fifteen male respondents claimed that they call their spouses' younger siblings who have not become parents by their names.

Participant observation however showed that, in recent times, some women have found their ways around this by giving in-laws nicknames such as *alákòwé* (an educated person), *idi ileke* (one with beads on her buttocks) etc. Either way, the majority of Yorùbá women do not just call in-laws that are younger than them solely by their first names as a sign of respect. It is therefore safe to conclude that, this gendered speech style which is not

characteristic of male speech is exclusive to women.

(3) The generic use of some Yorùbá noun phrases: Participant observation also showed that a lot of older Yorùbá women also refer to younger people who have either done something praise-worthy or behaved in a culturally-pleasing manner as *ọkọ ó mi* (my husband). The phrase is often used in a generic sense to refer to people of both sexes only by the womenfolk. This sexist form which has been perpetuated by women from time immemorial is an exclusive speech feature of the female gender as men do not have an equivalent feminine term used in a generic sense to refer to younger people of both sexes who have done something impressive neither do they partake in the use of this phrase in the sense in which it is used by women.

As noted by Yusuf (2002), the expressions *bábà mi* (my father) and *ọkọ ó mi* (my husband) are used as metaphors to refer generically to and praise a child or younger relative, male or female, who has done some impressive thing. Yusuf also adds that these expressions are used to console a sad or crying child or younger relative or to express a get-well-quick wish to a sick one. They are in addition, used to persuade a child or younger relative to carry out an instruction. The use of these terms is restricted to the children's mothers or elderly female relatives.

Although this study agrees with Yusuf on the generic use of the expression *ọkọ ó mi* by older Yorùbá women, it is however at variance with Yusuf's inclusion of the expression *bábà mi* in that same category. More appropriately, *bábà mi* which in its literal sense means "my father" can be used by both male and female to refer to one's father. However, women also use this speech form exclusively for a male child who has done something impressive and not for the female. Hence, it is a gendered female speech form as men do not share in this latter sense of such usage with women and neither do they use the corresponding feminine version *iyá mi* (My mother) to refer to a female who has done well. In fact, it is women (older women more precisely) who also exclusively use the expression *iyá mi* to refer to any female who has done something they find praise-worthy.

(4) The semantic expansion of the Yorùbá words for parents-in-law: Related to the one above are the usages of the phrases *bábà ọkọ mi* (my husband's father/ my father-in-law) and *iyá ọkọ mi* (my husband's mother/ my mother-in-law) among some married women. Although, in the literal sense, both respectively translate to "my father in-law" and "my mother-in-law" and are used as such by both male and female, two (13.3%) of the fifteen female respondents claimed they refer to their husbands' younger siblings as *iyá ọkọ mi* (my mother-in-law) and *bábà ọkọ mi* (my father-in-law) for female and male respectively, while there is no such corresponding usage of these terms in similar ways by any of the male respondents. Apparently, the only people men refer to in those manners are their spouses' actual parents.

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Participant observation also showed that some Yorùbá women have further extended the use of these terms to refer to other members of their husbands' families. Hence, any male member of the husband's family such as cousins and nephews could also be referred to *bábà oko mi* (my father-in-law) ditto for any female member of the husband's family who is equally sometimes addressed as *iyá oko mi* (my mother-in-law). This extended speech patterns were not found in male speech forms as men's usages of the terms *bábà iyàwó mi* (my wife's father/my father-in-law) and *iyá iyàwó mi* (my wife's mother/my mother-in-law) is used strictly to address the parents-in-law of their wives and not any other member of their wives' families.

(5) The semantic expansion of other Yorùbá words: the term *iyáalé*, a contraction of the words *iyá* and *ilé* meaning 'mother' and 'house' respectively and which literally translates to 'mother of the house' has two usages and although, one of the usages is exclusive to the womenfolk, the other is not. Generally, the term refers to the first woman to be married to a man in a polygamous home. Hence, people of both genders could refer to the first wife in a polygamous family as the *iyáalé* of such a household. In this sense, the use of the term *iyáalé* is not a peculiar feature of women's speech.

On the other hand, the word could also be used to refer to any woman who was married into a family before another woman but not necessarily to the same man. For example, women that got married to one's husband's brother(s), nephew(s), uncle(s) and cousin(s) before one's marriage to one's husband are also referred to as *iyáalé*. Therefore, any woman, regardless of whether she is older or younger than the addressee is the addressee's *iyáalé* if she got married into the addressee's husband's family before the addressee. Men do not however partake in the use of the word in its latter sense. Hence, while a man in a polygamous marriage would refer to his first wife as his *iyáalé*, he would not refer to any woman that was married to a man from his wife's family before him as his *iyáalé*, nor would he address other men who were already married to women from his wife's family before him as *baálé*, a masculine equivalent of *iyáalé* which literally, translates to 'father of the house'.

These examples show that in the Yorùbá culture, women's speech style, especially the married ones, is expected to show more deference to their husbands and by extension, their husbands' relatives as that is an integral aspect of the Yorùbá culture. It further demonstrates the greater burden of respect that the Yorùbá society places on women when compared to men. A striking similarity exists between these Yorùbá examples and the Bengali one reported by Holmes (2008). According to Holmes, in the Bengali society, a younger person should not address a superior by his name. Similarly, a wife being subordinate to her husband, is not permitted to use his name. Holmes therefore states that there are clearly identifiable differences between women's and men's speech in such

communities thus, reflecting the clearly demarcated gender roles in these communities.

6. Gender-preferential speech forms in Yorùbá

Having taken a look at those speech forms that are exclusive to the majority of Yorùbá women, it is also important to examine those that occur more in the speech of one gender than the other. That is, gender-preferential speech features in the Yorùbá language. Instances of gender preference in speech are those in which men and women do not use different speech forms; rather, “they use different quantities or frequencies of the same forms” (Holmes, 2008:160).

For example, participant observation showed that, when compared with their male counterparts, a higher number of Yorùbá women do not refer to the genitals by their actual names; they often use the term *abé* – a cover term for the entire private part in place of *okó* (penis) and *òbó* (vagina) which are the actual Yorùbá names for the male and female genital organs respectively. This means that, although the term *abé* is characteristic of both male and female speech, it is found more in female speech than male. When asked of what they call the genital organs, nine (60.0%) of the fifteen male respondents say they generally use the terms, *nkan omokunrin* and *nkan omobinrin* which literally translates to ‘male something and female something’ respectively while the other six (40.0%) claimed they use the term *abé*.

As for the female respondents, thirteen (86.7%) of them said they use the term *abé* while two (13.3%) said they use the terms *nkan omokunrin* and *nkan omobinrin*.

When asked of the Yorùbá term they use for the act of copulation, all respondents claimed they use euphemistic versions such as *bá sùn*, *sún mó* and *bá l’ájosepò* which literally translate to ‘sleep with’, ‘move close to’ and ‘engage in relationship with’ respectively. However worthy of note is the fact that, eight of the fifteen (53.3%) male respondents say they sometimes make use of the non-euphemistic form *do* (copulate) in casual conversations in their inner circle of friends, while only four of the fifteen (26.7%) female respondents say they also use the word in very restricted contexts. One can therefore conclude that, even with restrictions in the contexts of usages between both genders, the frequency of the use of the Yorùbá word for copulation (*dó*) is higher among men than women. In this instance, more men than women use the actual Yorùbá word for copulation.

Another instance of gender-preferential speech feature in the Yorùbá language is the frequency of the curse words by each gender. When asked if they use curse words such as *olóribúrukú* (unfortunate fellow), *olósí* (poverty-stricken fellow) etc, thirteen of the fifteen male respondents (86.7%) claimed they do not use them while the two (13.3%) who claimed they use them, explained that they are usually forced to do so in retaliation

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especially when other road users, insult them with curse words in traffic. Other than that, they claimed they make no use of such words.

Of the fifteen female respondents on the other hand, seven (46.7%) admitted that they use curse words only when provoked or in retaliation, when such words are used against them. Data from participant observation corroborated this as it was observed that curse words are more predominant in the linguistic repertoire of Yorùbá women than in those of Yorùbá men. Contrary to the claim of provocation made by some of the women however, participant observation showed that a number of women also use curse words on their offspring as a means chastisement.

As the difference between speech and music is said to be melody, extending the scope of this research to Yorùbá music genres viz-a-viz the gender that dominates each genre will be quite interesting. What this means is that, the preferential features manifested in speech also applies to different genres of Yorùbá music. For example, *Fújì* is the preferred genre for male artistes and are thus, highly dominated by them. According to Dan (2017), male Yorùbá musicians have dominated the *Fújì* music genre. Among them are the Late Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, General Kollington Ayinla, Ayinde Wasiu Marshall, Abass Akande Obesere, Sefiu Alao, Saheed Okunola Osupa while Iyabo Alake Osanle, the only female who tried to make a career of *Fújì* music did not succeed.

Instances of gender-preferential speech features in other climes were also reported in Holmes (2008) who states that, in all the English-speaking cities where speech data has been collected, women use more *-ing* [iŋ] pronunciations and fewer *-in* [in] pronunciations that men in words like *swimming* and *typing*. She adds that in Montreal, the French used by women and men is distinguished by the frequencies with which they pronounce [I] in phrases such as *il y a* and *il fait*. Both women and men delete [I], but men do so more often than women. In Sydney, some women and men pronounce the initial sound in *thing* as [f], but the men use this pronunciation more than the women. Both the social and the linguistic patterns in these communities are gender-preferential (rather than gender-exclusive). Though both women and men use particular forms, one gender's frequency of usage of such words, is higher than the other gender's.

7. Summary and conclusion

In this study, expressions that are gender-exclusive in the Yorùbá language were examined. Some of the female exclusive speech forms apply only to married women because they are mostly address forms married women use when relating with their husbands' relatives. Also brought to the fore is the fact that, the bulk of these expressions are actually not just exclusive to women but that also reflect a greater amount of politeness that married women have to show towards their husbands' relations in compliance with

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Yorùbá cultural norms and values. This shows the extent to which the patriarchal nature of the Yorùbá society imparts on the speech forms of each gender. Also examined were gender-preferential speech features which provided some insights into the preferred speech forms of each gender in the Yorùbá language.

The study has shown that among Yorùbá people, there are gender-sensitive linguistic boundaries which the majority of women have tacitly agreed to adhere to. Particularly interesting in this regard, is the successful inter-generational transfer of linguistic forms used exclusively by women which has continued to survive in the different communities surveyed in spite of the exposure of a lot of the women interviewed to Western culture through the acquisition of Western education. The intergenerational transfer of gendered-speech forms among married Yorùbá women could be attributed to the fact that, women themselves are the custodians of these gendered-speech forms with older women in most cases, ensuring compliance by younger women.

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