The Sexism in English and Its Rebuilding

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Abstract

Through lots of examples, the passage exhibits the phenomenon of sexism in English and its reason, its main display and its rebuilding, and explains the importance of eliminating it.

Keywords: Sexism, Reason, Display, Rebuilding

Language is the reflection of every part of society, no exception for English. Setting up the brand of equality and democracy, the western world actually exists a phenomenon called sexism as a well-known tradition. What on earth is Sexism? Here is the definition from *American Tradition Dictionary* — The discrimination that one group to another, especially male to female. Therefore, owning to language habits, sexism usually refers to discrimination that language used for women. Furthermore, it indicates that the cultural attitude of the person who is writing or speaking is stressing men and displaying women. This paper attempts to analyze sexism in English through reason, display and rebuilding, ect.

1. The reason why sexism appears

1.1 The influence of history development

From ancient time on, the ruling position in western society is almost held by male persons. From the Emperor Caesar invading Britain, to Duke William conquering Normandy, until British royal family later, we could nearly find ruling females. After climbing to the high position, men began to look down upon women. This attitude could influence the ideology of the whole society. So lots of men-central terms with sexist's color came into being during the stage of English forming. In the 14th century, Chaucer, who is concieved as the Father of English language, created a great deal of terms, later, Milton and Shakespeare competitively invented new words. They contributed a lot to English, at the same time, the negative side they brought can't be ignored. These famous male's contribution to English who were living in male's society, accelerated the extensive transmission of the language of sexism.

1.2 The influence of cultural ideology

Cultural ideology refers to the attitude which is closely connected with cultural value. The transmission of cultural ideology will have reaction to the bias and discrimination to females.

Myth is a style of culture, the image of female can help us to understand the sexism in language. In many myths all over the world, men are always called the model of races, but women are always the changed type from men. Although they sometimes are believed as the god of richness or the mother of lands, the imputation of the source of sins couldn't be got rid of. The leader god in Greek myth is Zeus, in Roman, it's Jupiter. As the headmaster of everything, the are surely men. On the contrary, the female god Pandora can only bring endless sins, disasters and unhappiness to the world. That is the allusion named Pandora's box.

1.3 The influence of social predudice and traditional view

From the influence of social crowd -- parents, relatives, friends, etc. and the transmission of public media – broadcasting, movie, TV, newspaper, etc, the view of men being over women will get stronger gradually. People get this view from their close persons. Then in English according to the influence of traditional view, the language sexism to female has changed into a vicious cycle. It's rooted so deeply that couldn't be eliminated in a short time.

2. The display of sexism in English

2.1 Regarding male's language as morality and main body

English treats everyone as a male except for special explanation. If somebody's sex is not known, he, his, him can be

used to mention the human being. This is a commom rule in English. In many proverbs, man is the general name for human. For example --No man is born wise or good. Though female's proportion in the world is over 50 percent, the using rate of *He* and *She* in documents is 4:1 according to some statistics.

2.2 Regarding women as exception

People psychologically conceives that persons who achieve success are certain to be males. Women who get famous are supposed to be exception. They will be advocated by the media unavoidably. Famous women always be added some suffixes showing their different sex from men whenever they're mentioned, but this cannot be found from men.

Some words are about profession, such as doctor, lawyer, reporter, attendant, etc. Although they are natural words, people only connected them with men owning to longtime habits. When women work in these fields, woman, lady, girl, female are added on purpose. Then, woman doctor, lady lawyer, girl reporter, female attendant, etc. come into being.

2.3 Positive male's words and negetive female's words

The two words *Woman* and *Female* are the most typical examples. Woman also means female servants, and female also represents being despised. The derived words of woman are more ridiculous. Woamnish takes the place of a weak man as a woman, womenize refers to a flirting man. A vulgar man is described by a root from women! On the contrary, some words about male are positive, meaning strength and courage, such as manly, virile, masculine,etc.. Some terms only about female are negative more or less. For example, madam also means gossiping woman, flirting woman or procuress; starlet means female star; witch is connected with female demon. In correspondance, sir, star, and wizard are all positive, even wizard also means a magic and skillful man.

2.4 Female terms are mostly marked

Most male words have no any fixed ending, however, most female words are often added an bound morpheme to the corresponded male words to become marked terms. For eample,

Male	Female
actor	actress
author	authoress
god	godess
hero	heroine
host	hostess
prince	princess

2.5 Male is followed by female when appears at the same time

Owning to the longtime habits, the order of the two sexes obeys a rule mostly that men leads women. The following examples are common, such as Mr. and Mrs. , his and hers, boys and girls, men and women, prince and princess, brothers and sisters, and host and hostess, and so on. If the order is reversed, almost all are supposed to feel uncomfortable.

3. The rebuilding of sexism in English

The rebuilding of female terms generally includes the followings,

3.1 Change positive endings into nautral, invent negative endings in correspodence with positive, and turn original positive endings into marked terms only for men.

positive endings	negative endings	neutral
chairman	chairwoman	chairperson
congressman	congresswoman	congressone
foreman	forewoman	supevisor
postman	postwoman	postworker
mankind	womankind	people

3.2 Take the places of the terms and phrases including man as much as possible.

man: human being, human, person, individual

mankind, man: human beings, humans, humankind, humanity

manmade: synthetic, artificial

manpower: workforce, staff, personnel, labour

3.3 Select neutral words instead of suffixes of females.

suffixes of females	neutral
waitress	server
stewardesses	flight attendants
aviatrix	aviator
poetess	poet
usherette	usher

3.4 Avoid using the words showing little respect to women

Don't't use these words such as the distaff or the fair/soft/weak/second sex, and don't call your wife as a little woman.

3.5 Use parallelism when mention males and females at the same time.

original	rebuilt
man and wife	husband and wife
men and girls	men and women /boys and girls

3.6 About the pronoun of the third singular—He

3.6.1 Use plural

When bathing a baby, never leave him unattended. ----- When bathing a baby, never leave them unattended.

3.6.2 Rebuild the original by We/us/our

From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs. ---- From each of us according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.

3.6.3 Change into the second person

No man knows his true character unti he has run out of gas, purchased something on the installment plan and raised an adolescent.------ You don't know what your true character is until you have run out of gas, purchased something on the installment plan and raised an adolescent.

3.6.2 Change into the passive voice

One who, when he has the choice of two evils, chooses both.---- One who, when given the choice of two evils, chooses both.

4. Conclusion

The forming of sexism in English language is closely connected with history, culture, education and custom, etc. , so it's impossible to eliminate or rebuild them in such a short time. It's a special responsibility for English learners and workers, for more persons' joining this heavy work can make the message of English more precise and clear, and the words more popular and elegant. The more vital thing is it will promote social development, sex equality, fair competition, dessolved social crisis and contradiction.

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