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## Reseñas / *Book reviews*

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*Innovations and Challenges. Women, Language and Sexism.*, (Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard Ed.), Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2020, 163 pages. ISBN 978-0-367-13372-6. 38€. Reviewed by *Alexandra Rodríguez Rodríguez*, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1279-7873>.

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*Gender and Discourse* is an area of applied discourse studies. Almost 50 years ago, in 1975, Robin Lakoff published one of the field's foundational texts *Language and woman's place*. In his book, Lakoff explores the relation between language and context in gendered language, understanding gendered language not only as morphological or grammatical questions but as ideological and social ones. The main purpose of the book was to figure out what the linguistic uses can tell us about the character and the scope of the gender inequalities in general and, ultimately, if we can address the issue from a linguistic perspective.

The book reviewed here pursuit a similar purpose. Through its chapters addresses issues as different as the representation of grandmothers, the gender roles in LEGO cards, the discursive frames of the sexual harassment, the sexism and gender-based

discrimination in schools or workplaces. The book includes also, two chapters that addresses the question of gender-based violence from the perspective of the mediated recontextualizations in a case in which a woman who ended up killing her aggressor in self-defense and the women's revictimization in the legal system.

As her editor, Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard point at the preface, this book seeks to "readdress the different and subtle ways sexism and linguistic violence against WOMEN are materialized in discursive practices" (p. xxi) considering patriarchy as a backdrop and power relations as a system which spreads in all areas of life.

With nine chapters grouped in two parts: *Language, Discourse and Gender Violence* and *Sexism and Institutional Discourses*, the authors explore this two fields always from an applied discourse studied perspective.

In chapter one, *Women, Language*

*and Public Discourse*, Alice Freed, Professor Emerita of Linguistics at Montclair State University examines the androcentrism in language since a morphological perspective. To show how sexism is embedded in language and also how it has changed in the last decades she studies two different areas. First, the sexism in a particular morphological form in the creation of new ways to name jobs historically occupied by men (policeman → police officer), the changes on pronominal usages, which has been widely developed by queer academics as McGlashan and Fitzpatrick (2017) that studied a group of trans students use of pronouns. She also studies the use of titles as *Ms/Mrs/Miss* pointing out the personal women situations into the way we address them. While men in English language in always named as *Mr* independently of their personal situation, women experimented a degradation of status depending if they are young, married or single. Secondly, Freed explores the sexism as discursive practice at the offensive portrayals of women in the media or public discourse, referring, for example, to the appearance to discredit her. The author also points at the dynamics of silencing and/or interrupting women in conversations and public debates and the studies about women's speech. In summary, Freed's chapter draws a general picture of the field that is more specifically addressed in the rest of the book.

Chapter two *The Gender Respect Gap*, by feminist linguist and professor Deborah Cameron, explores how women discourse is devaluated in contemporary discursive practices. She notes that in twitter, for example, a tweet about how the status mark "professor" or "doctor" are usually attributed to men and what problems it can generate to women professors or doctors. In her chapter, Cameron shows not only what this way of status devaluation supposes for women, but also the men's reaction at the social

network, they accused her of overreacting. As Cameron points, accusing the victim is a usual discursive practice when women report an unequal treatment, but also when they report rape or aggression.

In chapter three, *The Transgressive, the traditional. Sexist discourse of grandmothering and ageing*, Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard, the book's editor and Professor at Federal University of Santa Catarina; and Rosamund Moon, Professor at University of Birmingham; analyze the category "grandmother" through images and language from a semiotic perspective. As the authors point, there are very few studies about the grandmother's representations. So, they analyze a corpus of bank images and texts in order to find out the social characterization of grandmothers. Using Van Leeuwen's theory about social semiotics and social actor's representation the authors conclude that grandmothers are represented in two ways: in domestic context sharing semiotic resources with childhood and in funny or unexpected contexts.

In chapter four, *Disco divas and heroic knights: a critical multimodal discourse of gender roles in 'create the world' LEGO cards*, Jai Mackenzie, Laura Coffey-Glover, Sophie Payne and Mark McGlashan use also Van Leeuwen's social actor theory to find out if the cards analyzed make a gender differentiation and if so, in which way they do it. Their main findings were that male are overrepresented with a 67 per cent of the total compared to a 33 per cent of minifigures identified as female. Also, when the female minifigures represent action or violent scenes or use weapons is always into "fantasy" characters, as the authors explain this "creates the impression that gender norms can only be transgressed within the confines of role play and fantasy" (p. 74).

Branca Telles, Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and researcher at the Language, Health and Communication's field; and Liliana Cabral, Associate Professor in the Letters

Department of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio the Janeiro explore at the Chapter five *Sexual harassment as reported by Brazilian press: ambivalent and contradictory frames*. In this chapter, the authors use Goffman's methodology on framing (1974) to identify the "frames", that are the different ways in which a group of ideas are ensembled into discourse and ideology, about the #metoo and sexual harassment protest in Brazil lately. Their conclusions focus at the "conflicts and paradoxes that emerged in this debate" (p. xxiii). As Giró (2017) proved in another article about framing, frames are hybrid and full of contradictions. Also, Telles and Cabral found out that younger men start to be aware of feminist discourse which means that the gender issue is going though de hegemonic discourses.

Since chapter five, the research corresponds with Part I: Language, Discourse and Gender Violence. In Part two: Sexism and Institutional Discourses, the authors address critics to the institution. As we see in *Feminist Fortunes* Nancy Fraser's book, the androcentrism, as an institutionalized pattern, codes "many areas of law (including family law and criminal law), inform legal constructions of privacy, autonomy, self-defense, and equality" (Fraser, 2013: 162). Following this assertion, the next three chapters will address this problematic.

In Chapter six, *Until I got a man in he wouldn't listen*, Janet Holmes, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand; discusses the different roles that women play at workplaces. Her ethnographic approach allows her to investigate a large corpus of workplace's interactions recorded by volunteers with more than 700 participants. She observes that there is an important progress in the roles that women develop in workplaces. More and more women occupy places of authority and make decisions. Nevertheless

"the influence of gendered norms and socio-cultural expectations undoubtedly constrain those available to female rather than male workers" (p. 109)

Chapter seven, *Sexism and mediatized recontextualisations: the case of a battered women who killed* by Sibley Slinkard, recent Pd.D. in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from York University, Toronto and Susan Ehrlich, Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics at York University, Toronto; explores the media coverage of a women who killed her abusive partner. The authors analyze the case from the media representation that composed a final corpus of 40 news concluding that Teresa acted with intent and was guilty of murder. The articles analyzed were blind to the previous context that led the woman to commit murder, this context was an abusive relationship.

Nicci MacLeod, from Northumbria University, investigate at Chapter eight, *The discourse or (re)exploitation: female victims in the legal system*; the rape's victim discourse through interviews. The object of this research are the police's interviews to victims in cases of rape. They found out that there are two different discursive strategies, in one hand victims downplays the violence they suffered while others resist "the implications of these same patterns" (p. 141). As many feminist academics had proven, the victims never fit into "what a victim is" to the police and legal system which has consequences to the credibility of his testimony.

To finish, Chapter 9, *Language-based Discrimination in School*, by Helen Saunston, Professor of English and Linguistics at York St John University, Toronto; employs tools from the Critical Discourse Analysis's approach to study the "gender triggered points" in classrooms. She analyzes how linguistic choices include and exclude different gender roles and sexual orientations. Saunston found out that the teacher's discourse reinforces the heteronormativity and other identities are

not represented. This way of representing reality since the school does not represent LGTB+ communities and has consequences on the way discrimination operates since early ages.

This book offers to students and academics a large framework of methodologies, case studies and approaches to understand how sexism is reproduced through discursive practices. We can affirm that it is one of the most complete book on the field, nevertheless we can find an important lack, not only in

this book but in all the field; there is no one article or approach to the feminist movement's discourse. While the authors analyze the ways, hegemonic discourse represent women or sexism, the last sixty years of feminist studies and practice are not represented. It will be enriching feminist activist's strategies of legitimation and representation of women.

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