
Language and Gender in Pashto: A Study of Linguistic Sexism in Everyday Discourse

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Abstract

Sexist language refers to any language that is intended to be inclusive of all genders but inadvertently (or otherwise) excludes one gender, whether male or female. Examining linguistic sexism involves exploring the connection between language and gender. The Pashto language, reveals significant gender biases deeply embedded in its semantics, morphology, syntax, and proverbs. This research explores these biases through a comprehensive analysis of semantics, morphology, syntax, and proverbs. Semantic analysis reveals that words associated with men typically convey strength and authority, while those linked to women often carry negative or diminished connotations, reflecting broader societal undervaluation of women. Morphological examination uncovers how gender-specific suffixes in Pashto diminish the status of women, reinforcing traditional power dynamics. The syntactical analysis highlights the default male interpretation and the imposition of gender-specific roles through sentence structures and pronoun usage, further entrenching male dominance and female subordination. Finally, the study of proverbs demonstrates how cultural expressions encode and perpetuate sexist attitudes, depicting women in subordinate roles and reinforcing their confinement to the domestic sphere. Collectively, these linguistic sexist elements not only mirror but also contribute to the maintenance of a patriarchal social order in Pashtun society. Addressing these biases is crucial for challenging and dismantling the deep-rooted gender inequalities that persist within this cultural context.

Keywords; Linguistic Analysis, Sexist language, Gender biases, Pashto

Introduction

Language helps us talk to each other and understand the world. (María, 2005) says that through language, we form our view of society, organize what we know, learn new things, and take in the rules and patterns of our community. Language shapes our thoughts, shows our culture, and affects how we interact with others. This is why it's important to change how we use language, making it more fair and respectful, especially toward different genders. Language isn't fixed; it changes as society changes, and using language that doesn't discriminate is a key part of this change.

Language is always changing and shows how society feels about things. We live in a world where men are often valued more than women, and this is reflected in our language. When society changes, language changes too, but sometimes we don't fully understand how these changes affect our values. Language not only shows what people think but can also change what people think. As we work towards treating everyone equally, our language should support and show these changes. Good communication means not just making sentences that are correct but also understanding how to talk appropriately. This study will explain what sexism is, how it shows up in language, and suggest better words to use that fit with our changing society.

This study is about sociolinguistics, which means studying how language connects with society (Hudson, 1996). Sociolinguistics looks at how things like social class, ethnicity, lifestyle, education, age, gender, attitudes, and feelings affect the way we use language. Instead of just focusing on how language is structured or where it is used, sociolinguists are interested in understanding why people use language the way they do. This study looks at sociolinguistics; which (Hudson,1996) describes as the study of language in relation to society. This means sociolinguistics studies how language connects with different parts of society, like social class, ethnicity, lifestyle, education, age, gender, attitudes, and emotions. Sociolinguistics focuses more on how language is used in communication rather than just its structure.

This research focuses on examining how sexist language appears in everyday Pashto conversations. As a native speaker of Pashto, the researcher has noticed how people talk in their daily lives and has also looked at Pashto literature to help with this study.

What is Sexism and Linguistic Sexism?

Sexism is when people think one gender is better than the other. (Wilson et al., 2013) said it's about what people expect from women, like how they should look, act, and what they can do. In many societies, sexism is shown when people think men are better than women. Even though sexism has been a problem for a long time, some people ignore it because they think it's not a real issue anymore. But sexism is still around today. When someone does something sexist, it means they believe men and women are different in ways that aren't true and it hurts people. (Graddol & Swann, 1989) said sexism is any unfair treatment of people based on their gender for no good reason. So, while men can face sexism too, it doesn't happen as often.

Sexism refers to prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against individuals based on their sex or gender. It often involves the belief that one sex is inherently superior to another, leading to unfair treatment and societal inequalities. Sexism manifests in various forms, including workplace discrimination, educational inequalities, and social stereotypes. For instance, in many professional settings, women may be overlooked for promotions or leadership roles based on gender biases, despite having equivalent or superior qualifications compared to their male counterparts. Linguistic sexism, on the other hand, is a form of sexism that is embedded in language. It involves the use of language that perpetuates gender stereotypes and reinforces the notion of gender inequality. This can occur through biased language that undervalues one gender, uses gendered terms in a way that reflects inequality, or reflects societal norms that disadvantage one gender over another. For example, the use of the term "manpower" to refer to human labor implies that such work is inherently masculine, thereby marginalizing women's contributions. Similarly, gendered language in job descriptions that uses terms like "aggressive" or "nurturing" can discourage certain genders from applying, reinforcing stereotypes about which traits are suitable for specific roles.

Linguistic Sexism, Sexist Language, or Gender-Exclusive Language

Sexist language is generally defined as language that claims to be inclusive of all genders but inadvertently or intentionally excludes one gender—either males or females. This type of language is often evident in contexts related to occupations, with stereotypes such as doctors being men, nurses being women, coaches being men, or teachers being women. Despite the fact that these assumptions are increasingly outdated, such language continues to reinforce these stereotypes. Atkinson, et al. (1993) describe "linguistic sexism" as encompassing various verbal practices. This includes how women are labelled and addressed, as well as how language strategies in mixed-gender interactions might marginalize or undervalue women. (Ivy & Backlund, 2004) further clarify that if sexism pertains to attitudes and behaviours that demean one gender in favour of another, then sexist language reflects those attitudes and behaviours in verbal communication.

Sometimes, sexist language is used to hurt someone on purpose. While some people might use these words without realizing they are being hurtful, others might use them to try to make someone feel bad. Whether it's done on purpose or not, sexist language can be a form of bullying. It's important to be careful with our words and think about how they might affect others, so we don't hurt people without meaning to. The stereotype is that women are always seen in a negative light, while men are always seen as noble, even in the same situation. This shows how language can make women seem less important. Many feminists have looked into how language talks about women and found that it is often unfair and based on outdated ideas about men and women (Cameron, 2005). This means that language shows the values of a culture, which can be sexist. Cameron explains: Language can show how sexist culture is, or it can carry ideas that, when repeated often, become so normal that we don't notice their impact. So, sexism isn't just shown in language but also acted out and kept going in everyday conversations (Cameron, 2005).

Is Pashto a Sexist Language?

The Pashto language, spoken in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, often shows that men and women are treated differently. Research shows that sexism is part of the way Pashto is used and

understood. In the past, Pashto-speaking societies have had different rules for men and women, and this is seen in the language. For example, the word 'سړی' (man) is often seen as stronger and more important, while 'ښځه' (woman) can have less respectful meanings. Also, the language uses different words for men and women that show old-fashioned ideas, like 'khwendo' (sister) being connected to home and caring roles, while 'young' (youth) usually means a man with leadership and important roles. This shows that sexism is not just in specific words but also in the way the language is used every day. In the Pashto language, sexism is evident through various aspects of its vocabulary, semantics, and linguistic structures. This can be observed in the following ways:

Sexism in Pashto Semantics

Pashto daily discourse where a single word or sentence can carry different meanings or connotations:

مست (Mast); In Pashto, the adjective "مست" (drunk) demonstrates a clear example of semantic sexism. The term is applied differently to men and women, reflecting underlying societal biases. **For Men:** "هغه مست دی" (He is drunk), When "مست" is used to describe a man, it often implies a state of temporary inebriation, typically associated with a lack of judgment or control due to intoxication. The term here is neutral, sometimes even conveying a sense of social permissibility or acceptance. The behavior might be viewed as an understandable lapse, not necessarily reflecting on the man's character or morality. **For Women:** "هغې مسته ده" (She is drunk), In contrast, when the same term "مسته" is used to describe a woman, it carries much heavier, often negative, connotations. In Pashto-speaking communities, a woman being drunk is frequently stigmatized, implying a breach of social and moral norms. The adjective describes her state and invokes societal judgment, questioning her character, morality, and adherence to traditional gender roles. This differential usage of "مست" reveals deep-seated gender biases in Pashto semantics. The term's neutral or even lenient application to men contrasts sharply with the stigmatization it carries when applied to women. This reflects broader societal attitudes that grant men more freedom in behavior while imposing stricter moral expectations on women. Such semantic distinctions contribute to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, illustrating how language can perpetuate sexism by embedding these biases in everyday discourse.

سادہ (Sada)

In Pashto, the adjective "سادہ" (simple) is a common descriptor used for both men and women. However, its connotations vary depending on the gender of the person being described, which exemplifies a form of linguistic sexism embedded in the language. **for Men:** "هغه سادہ دی" (He is simple), When "سادہ" is used to describe a man, it typically carries a neutral or even positive connotation. It suggests that the man is unpretentious, straightforward, and genuine. In this context, being "simple" implies that the man is down-to-earth and free from deceit or arrogance. The term does not undermine his capabilities, intelligence, or ambition but rather emphasizes his honesty and humility. This positive framing reflects a societal expectation that values modesty in men without questioning their competence or worth. **for Women:** "هغې سادہ ده" (She is simple), In contrast, when "سادہ" is applied to a woman, the term can acquire a pejorative tone. It may imply that she is unsophisticated, naïve, or lacking in ambition. Unlike in the male context, where

"simple" can be seen as a virtue, for women, it often suggests a deficiency in complexity or depth, potentially undermining her intellectual or social standing. This negative connotation reflects underlying societal attitudes that expect women to be more socially and intellectually refined. When a woman is described as "ساده," it can subtly criticize her for not meeting these gendered expectations, thus reinforcing stereotypes that prioritize certain attributes in women over others. The differing connotations of the word "ساده" based on gender highlight how linguistic structures can perpetuate gender biases in Pashto. While a "simple" man is viewed favorably for his straightforwardness and lack of pretension, a "simple" woman is often judged negatively, implying a lack of sophistication or ambition. This semantic asymmetry not only reveals underlying societal attitudes towards gender roles but also perpetuates them through everyday language use. Such examples are crucial for understanding the broader impact of linguistic sexism in Pashto-speaking communities and contribute to the ongoing discussion of gender equality in language.

خوشاله (Khushala)

In Pashto semantics, the adjectives "خوشاله" (khushala) used in the sentences "هغه خوشاله دی" (He is happy) and "هغې خوشاله ده" (She is happy) provide a lens through which gendered connotations in the language can be explored, particularly in the context of Pashtun society. In the sentence "هغه خوشاله دی" (He is happy), the adjective "خوشاله" is used to describe a man's emotional state. This expression is generally interpreted straightforwardly and positively, reflecting societal acceptance of a man's happiness as normal and unremarkable. The emotion of happiness in men is often seen as a natural response to a favorable situation, and thus, there is no underlying implication of anything unusual. Conversely, when the same adjective is used in the sentence "هغې خوشاله ده" (She is happy), it may carry different connotations. While the literal meaning is positive, the societal interpretation can sometimes be tinged with skepticism or surprise. This implies that a woman's happiness might be viewed as less genuine, unusual, or even suspicious, suggesting that her emotional state is either not as significant or that it may be contingent upon factors outside her control. In some cases, this skepticism can reflect a broader societal attitude that undervalues or mistrusts women's emotions. The differential connotations of "خوشاله" when applied to men and women reveal an implicit bias in the language that reflects deeper societal expectations. Men are often expected to be stoic and in control of their emotions, so when they express happiness, it is seen as a sign of success or achievement. On the other hand, women, who are often stereotyped as more emotional, might have their happiness questioned or downplayed, especially if it does not align with societal norms or expectations. This subtle semantic sexism is indicative of broader gender dynamics within Pashtun society, where women's emotions are often subjected to greater scrutiny and less credibility. The language reflects and reinforces these societal attitudes, contributing to the maintenance of traditional gender roles and the marginalization of women's emotional experiences. In many Pashtun communities, women's public expression of happiness might be seen as inappropriate or even provocative, especially if it challenges conventional norms. This can lead to a situation where a woman's happiness is either not taken seriously or is viewed with suspicion, reflecting the broader cultural constraints on female expression and autonomy. Such examples, we can better understand the intersection of language, gender, and culture in Pashto-speaking communities.

بڼه (Kha)

the expressions "هغه ښه دی" (He is good) and "هغې ښه ده" (She is good) highlights how gendered language in Pashtun society reflects and reinforces traditional gender roles. "**He is good**": The word "ښه" (good) in this context is used to describe a man's positive qualities. This adjective can encompass a wide range of attributes, including moral integrity, bravery, intelligence, and leadership. In Pashtun society, when a man is described as "ښه," it often implies that he is meeting the societal expectations of masculinity—being strong, decisive, and honorable. The phrase carries a positive connotation that aligns with the broader cultural values placed on male behavior, highlighting traits considered admirable in men. This usage reinforces the stereotype that men are naturally inclined towards qualities that are universally praised and valued in society. The term "ښه" in this context is more than just a description; it reflects the societal belief that men are inherently capable of exhibiting traits that are considered beneficial and valuable. "**She is good**": When the same adjective "ښه" (good) is applied to a woman, as in "هغې ښه ده," the connotation subtly shifts. While it remains a positive descriptor, the phrase can sometimes carry an implicit expectation that her "goodness" is tied to traditionally feminine virtues. These might include obedience, modesty, nurturing behavior, and adherence to social norms regarding female behavior. In Pashtun society, a woman's "goodness" is often measured by her conformity to these roles. The phrase may be used to praise a woman who embodies these qualities, suggesting that her value lies in her ability to fulfill expected gender roles. This reflects a form of semantic sexism, where the same word "ښه" takes on different connotations based on the gender of the person it describes. It suggests that a woman's positive qualities are inherently linked to her fulfillment of societal expectations rather than her attributes. These examples illustrate how semantic sexism operates in Pashto by subtly reinforcing gender roles through language. The same adjective, "ښه," shifts in meaning depending on whether it describes a man or a woman, reflecting the deep-seated cultural norms that dictate what is considered "good" for each gender. This linguistic phenomenon perpetuates the idea that men and women are valued differently in society, with men's worth being tied to their actions and achievements, while women's worth is more closely linked to their adherence to traditional roles.

تجربه (Tajurba)

In Pashto the expression "هغه تجربه لري" (He has experience), The phrase implies that the individual possesses practical or professional skills. In Pashto-speaking societies, this statement is generally accepted at face value. The term "تجربه" (experience) here is viewed as a straightforward indication of competence and skill, without additional scrutiny. For men, experience is often perceived as an inherent and credible asset. There is less likelihood of questioning their qualifications or the authenticity of their experience. This reflects a broader societal tendency to assume that men's competencies are established and accepted without needing further validation. "هغې تجربه لري" (She has experience), When the same statement is made about a woman, it can carry different connotations. The word "تجربه" (experience) may be subject to additional scrutiny or skepticism. This reflects a societal bias where a woman's experience is often questioned more rigorously. Women may face challenges in being taken as seriously as their male counterparts regarding their professional or practical skills. The added scrutiny and skepticism can be seen as a form of semantic sexism, where women's achievements and qualifications are undervalued or doubted, reinforcing gender-based discrimination. The difference in how experience is evaluated based on gender highlights implicit biases within Pashtun society. This bias is reflected in language, where women's qualifications are not automatically taken at face value. Instead, there is a tendency to

critically assess or even undermine their achievements. This differential treatment can affect women's professional lives by undermining their authority and competence. It perpetuates a cycle where women's skills and experiences must be validated repeatedly, unlike their male counterparts. Such language use reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations. By questioning the validity of a woman's experience, society implicitly reinforces the notion that women's roles are less significant or credible compared to men's. In Pashto, the differential treatment of experience based on gender highlights deeper societal attitudes where women's professional achievements are scrutinized more than men's. This form of semantic sexism not only impacts how women are perceived but also affects their opportunities and treatment in professional and social contexts.

تخليقي (Takhliki)

The expression, "هغه تخليقي دی" (He is creative), In this sentence, the term "تخليقي" (creative) is applied to a male subject. In Pashto-speaking Pashtun society, creativity in men is often seen as a positive trait that is celebrated and valued. The use of "تخليقي" here aligns with a societal norm where creativity is recognized as an inherent positive attribute, and the male subject is seen as embodying this trait naturally. This reflects an endorsement of the idea that men are more naturally inclined toward creative pursuits and achievements. "هغه تخليقي ده" (She is creative), In this sentence, the same term "تخليقي" is used to describe a female subject. While creativity itself remains a positive attribute, its application to women can carry different connotations due to prevailing stereotypes. In Pashtun society, where traditional gender roles often marginalize women's achievements, a woman being described as "تخليقي" might be viewed with a sense of surprise or exceptionalism. This reflects a deeper, underlying assumption that women are less likely to be recognized for their creative abilities. Thus, while the attribute itself is positive, the context in which it is applied to women can inadvertently highlight and reinforce gender biases. The different reactions to the term "تخليقي" based on the subject's gender reveal an underlying stereotype that women are less naturally creative or less likely to achieve in creative fields. This can contribute to a societal perception that female creativity is an anomaly rather than a norm, reinforcing gendered expectations and limiting the recognition of women's accomplishments. When creativity in women is seen as exceptional or unusual, it may undermine their achievements by implying that such traits are not expected or common among women. This can affect how women's contributions are valued and recognized in both personal and professional contexts. The semantic difference highlights how language can perpetuate societal biases. By framing female creativity as noteworthy or surprising, the language reflects and reinforces broader societal attitudes that place women at a disadvantage in creative and professional arenas. The examples provided illustrate how semantic choices in Pashto reflect gender biases within Pashtun society. While the term "تخليقي" itself is neutral, its application to men and women carries different societal implications, revealing underlying gender stereotypes and how the same words can carry different connotations based on the gender of the individual being described. Such semantic differences reflect broader societal attitudes and expectations related to gender roles and norms in Pashto-speaking communities.

Sexism in the Morphology of the Pashto Language

Sexism in the morphology of a language refers to how the structure and form of words reflect and perpetuate gender biases and stereotypes. In Pashto, this can manifest in various ways, such as

differences in terms of men and women, or the use of gendered forms that reflect societal attitudes towards gender roles.

"داکتر" (daktar) and "داکتره" (daktarh)"

Morphological sexism in the Pashto language can be observed in the way gender is marked through affixes and how these morphological markers can carry implicit biases or connotations that reinforce gender inequality. The terms "داکتر" (daktar) and "داکتره" (daktarh) serve as an example of this phenomenon. The term "داکتر" (daktar) is generally considered gender-neutral and is used to refer to a doctor regardless of gender. In Pashto, this term is the standard form and does not carry any gender-specific affix, making it seemingly neutral. However, in practice, it is more commonly associated with male doctors due to societal norms where male doctors have been more prominent. The addition of the suffix "ه" (h) to form "داکتره" (daktarh) is an attempt to feminize the noun, explicitly marking the term as referring to a female doctor. While this suffix serves to denote gender, it often carries connotations of lower status or different roles, reflecting the societal view that female professionals are not on the same level as their male counterparts. The base form "داکتر" is unmarked and the gender-specific form "داکتره" being marked suggests an implicit hierarchy, where the unmarked (and therefore 'default') form is male, and the marked form, female, is seen as a variation rather than the norm. In Pashtun society, where gender roles are traditionally rigid, the use of such morphological distinctions in language can influence perceptions and attitudes towards female professionals. The biases embedded in language can contribute to the broader social context of gender inequality, affecting how women are viewed and treated in professional settings.

بنوونکی (khonke): Teacher (male).

بنوونکی (khonki): Teacher (female).

In Pashto, the distinction between male and female teachers is reflected morphologically in the words "بنوونکی" for a male teacher and "بنوونکی" for a female teacher. This morphological difference, primarily a suffix-based modification, is a common feature in Pashto and many other languages, where gender distinctions are embedded within the language structure itself. However, when analyzed through the lens of linguistic sexism, these morphological distinctions can reinforce gendered roles and stereotypes within Pashtun society. Morphological sexism refers to the way that language morphology—its system of word formation—reflects and perpetuates gender biases. In Pashto, the use of gender-specific suffixes like "کی" (-ke) for females and "کی" (-ki) for males is deeply ingrained in the language. While this distinction appears neutral, it can carry implicit biases. For instance, the female form "بنوونکی" might be perceived as a secondary or derivative form of the male "بنوونکی" reinforcing the idea that the male role is the default or more prestigious. The use of gendered morphemes in Pashto not only differentiates roles based on gender but can also influence the perception of those roles. In Pashtun society, where traditional gender roles are strongly emphasized, the morphological distinction in terms like "بنوونکی" and "بنوونکی" reinforces the notion that men and women occupy inherently different roles, even within the same profession. This distinction can also lead to differing expectations for male and female teachers. A "بنوونکی" might be viewed as more authoritative or capable due to the male association, whereas a "بنوونکی" might be seen as nurturing or secondary, aligning with traditional views of women as

caregivers or supporters. This perception can influence the way both teachers are treated by students, parents, and society at large. The existence of such morphological distinctions can perpetuate gender inequality by continually emphasizing differences between men and women. Even in professions where gender should be irrelevant to one's competence, such as teaching, the language used can subtly undermine efforts toward gender equality.

پسرلی (pasarli):

The term "پسرلی" (pasarli), The term "پسرلی" primarily denotes the spring season in Pashto. Morphologically, the word is neutral, not inherently tied to any gender. Despite its neutrality, "پسرلی" is metaphorically extended to describe a young man, particularly in poetic and colloquial contexts. This extension is not arbitrary but reflects deeper cultural associations where youth and vitality are often linked to masculinity. The association of "پسرلی" with a young man subtly reinforces the idea that youthfulness and vitality are primarily male attributes. This reflects a broader cultural pattern where positive qualities such as strength, vigor, and renewal (all metaphorically tied to spring) are predominantly linked to masculinity. The metaphorical usage of "پسرلی" perpetuates a stereotype that youthfulness and vitality are inherently male traits. By linking a season characterized by renewal and growth to masculinity, the language implicitly excludes women from these positive attributes. This linguistic pattern contributes to a gendered worldview within Pashtun society, where men are often seen as embodying the qualities of vigor and youth, while women are less frequently associated with such attributes. The language thus becomes a vehicle for reinforcing gendered expectations and roles. The example of "پسرلی" is a form of subtle sexism, where the language does not overtly discriminate but aligns certain positive qualities with one gender over the other. This kind of morphological sexism is pervasive, as it operates under the surface, influencing perceptions and reinforcing gender biases without being immediately obvious. In Pashto, the metaphorical use of "پسرلی" to describe a young man highlights a form of morphological sexism. While the word itself is neutral, its cultural and metaphorical extension reinforces the association of youth and vitality with masculinity. This not only perpetuates gender stereotypes but also subtly influences societal perceptions of gender roles and attributes. As such, examining words like "پسرلی" offers valuable insight into how morphology in the Pashto language can contribute to sexism within Pashtun society.

شاعر (sha'ar) and شاعره (sha'irah):

In Pashto, "شاعر" refers to a male poet, while "شاعره" denotes a female poet. In the context of morphological sexism within the Pashto language, the terms "شاعر" (sha'ar) for a male poet and "شاعره" (sha'irah) for a female poet offer a significant example. These terms illustrate how morphology—specifically the use of gendered suffixes—reinforces gender distinctions in language and reflects underlying societal attitudes toward gender roles within Pashtun society. The primary morphological difference between "شاعر" (sha'ar) and "شاعره" (sha'irah) lies in the suffix "-ه" (ah) that is added to the root "شاعر" to form the feminine counterpart "شاعره." This addition of a gender-specific suffix is a common linguistic practice in many languages, but in Pashto, it serves not only to denote gender but also to emphasize the gender divide. The root "شاعر" is gender-neutral in form but has become culturally entrenched as a masculine term, necessitating the creation of a distinct feminine form "شاعره." This morphological differentiation is not merely a linguistic convention but reflects deeper societal attitudes towards gender roles. The need to

distinguish between male and female poets through morphology suggests that their identities as poets are inherently tied to their gender, which can reinforce stereotypical perceptions. In Pashto-speaking communities, where traditional gender roles are still prominent, this linguistic differentiation can subtly imply that male and female poets occupy different, perhaps unequal, spaces in the literary domain. The male poet may be seen as the default or standard, while the female poet is marked as the "other" through the addition of the suffix. This gender-specific morphological practice contributes to sexism by reinforcing the notion that men and women are fundamentally different even in professional or artistic domains. By linguistically marking women as different from the norm (male poets), the language perpetuates a view of women as secondary or less central to the field of poetry. The existence of gendered forms can also imply that the qualities or expectations associated with male poets may differ from those of female poets, leading to biases in how their work is perceived and valued. The terms "شاعر" (sha'ar) and "شاعره" (sha'irah) in Pashto exemplify morphological sexism by highlighting how gendered morphology can both reflect and reinforce societal gender biases. This linguistic practice is not just a neutral grammatical rule but a mechanism that perpetuates gender distinctions, contributing to the broader framework of sexism within Pashtun society. By critically examining these morphological features, we can better understand how language shapes and is shaped by the social context in which it is used.

شيخ (sheikh) and شيخه (sheikha):

The term "شيخ" refers to a male religious leader or respected figure, while "شيخه" is used for a female in a similar role. In Pashto, the terms "شيخ" (Shaikh) and "شيخه" (Shaikha) serve as clear examples of morphological sexism, illustrating how gendered morphological forms contribute to reinforcing gender roles and expectations within Pashtun society. The term "شيخ" refers to a male religious leader or a respected figure, and it carries a strong connotation of authority, knowledge, and spiritual leadership. The male-oriented term is often associated with wisdom and high social standing. The corresponding feminine form "شيخه," while ostensibly providing a parallel role for women, does not carry the same weight or respect in the societal context. This reflects the broader societal expectations that men occupy more significant and authoritative roles within religious and social hierarchies. Morphologically, the feminine suffix "-ه" in "شيخه" ostensibly mirrors the male counterpart but semantically diminishes the power and authority associated with the role. The term "شيخه" is often not used with the same reverence and is sometimes even employed in a diminutive or dismissive sense. This indicates a societal bias where the feminine form is seen as secondary or inferior to the masculine form, despite representing the same role. This differentiation in morphological forms contributes to linguistic sexism by reinforcing the idea that male roles are inherently more valuable or respected than female roles. In Pashtun society, where gender roles are deeply entrenched, the language reflects and perpetuates these distinctions. The use of "شيخ" as a term of high respect and "شيخه" as a less revered counterpart subtly but powerfully reinforces the notion that male authority is normative and female authority is exceptional or secondary. The morphological distinction between "شيخ" and "شيخه" in Pashto does more than just distinguish gender; it actively contributes to the maintenance of gender hierarchies. By embedding these distinctions in the language, the society reinforces the idea that men's roles are the standard and women's roles are variations of this standard, often with diminished importance. This linguistic practice supports and perpetuates broader social inequalities by normalizing the lesser status of women in religious and leadership roles. The morphological sexism evident in the terms "شيخ" and "شيخه" illustrates how language structure can reinforce societal gender biases. The linguistic forms

not only reflect but also perpetuate the unequal distribution of power and respect between men and women in Pashtun society, contributing to the broader context of gender-based discrimination.

خان (khan) and خانم (khanum):

The title "خان" is used to denote a lord or master, while "خانم" is a polite term for women, often used in formal contexts. In Pashto, the terms "خان" (Khān) and "خانم" (Khānom) reflect deep-rooted morphological sexism. Morphologically, "خان" is a powerful and authoritative term that denotes a lord or master, often associated with male leadership, control, and social superiority. It carries significant connotations of respect, dominance, and status in Pashtun society, exclusively linked to men. On the other hand, "خانم," derived from the same root, is a feminized version of the word, signifying a polite and formal address for women. While "خانم" is respectful, it lacks the authority, power, and prestige that "خان" inherently possesses. This morphological distinction reflects how language encodes gender roles and reinforces the subordination of women within the social hierarchy. The male-associated term remains powerful and unmarked, whereas the female-associated term, despite its politeness, is marked and limited to a specific, less authoritative role. In the context of your research, this analysis highlights how morphology in the Pashto language not only differentiates between genders but also reinforces societal expectations and norms. The linguistic construction of these terms perpetuates gender inequality by embedding a lesser social value in the female-associated term, thus reflecting and contributing to the broader sexism within Pashtun society. This morphological sexism is a clear example of how language both mirrors and sustains gender disparities in the social structure.

Sexism in Syntax of the Pashto Language

Sexism in the syntax of the Pashto language involves examining how sentence structures and grammatical rules reflect and reinforce gender-based hierarchies and traditional gender roles. Syntax, which encompasses sentence structure, word order, and grammatical rules, plays a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes and norms. In Pashto, syntactical constructs often reflect and institutionalize gender hierarchies, influencing how roles and behaviors are perceived. By examining specific syntactic patterns this study aims to uncover how language perpetuates and normalizes gender inequalities, thus contributing to the broader discourse on linguistic sexism. In the Pashto language, pronouns can sometimes exhibit gender bias, particularly when used generically for example;

1.

Phrase: "هر څوک پوهیږي" (Har tsook pohiige)

Translation: "Everyone knows"

In the phrase "هر څوک پوهیږي" (Har tsook pohiige), translating to "Everyone knows," syntactical sexism can be observed in how the pronoun "هر څوک" (har tsook) is used within the Pashto language. Although the pronoun is intended to be generic, referring to any person regardless of gender, the syntax often reflects an underlying male bias. The pronoun "هر څوک" (har tsook) is supposed to be inclusive, but in practice, it often leans towards a male or neutral interpretation. This reflects a syntactical pattern where male subjects are assumed as the default in general

statements, marginalizing female representation. In everyday discourse, the context in which "هر څوک" is used often assumes a male subject, particularly in male-dominated settings or traditional contexts. This reflects a societal norm where the male perspective is prioritized, and the female perspective is either secondary or absent. The lack of explicit gender markers in the pronoun leads to a perceived neutrality. However, this neutrality is deceptive because the syntactical structure favors male interpretation, thereby reinforcing gender bias. The absence of a female-specific alternative or a truly inclusive form highlights the syntactical sexism embedded in the language. The syntax in Pashto, as seen in the use of "هر څوک," tends to default to a male perspective, implicitly excluding women from the narrative. This exclusion is not overt but is embedded in the syntactical choices that prioritize male interpretations. syntactical structures that favor male subjects, the language reinforces traditional gender norms within Pashtun society. The syntax perpetuates the idea that the male experience is the standard, while the female experience is either an exception or irrelevant.

2. "بنځه بايد له سري پرته سفر ونکړي" (Khza baid la sarai prta safar wnakri) Translation: "A woman should not travel without a man."

The phrase "بنځه بايد له سري پرته سفر ونکړي" (Khza baid la sarai prta safar wnakri), translating to "A woman should not travel without a man," reflects a syntactical construction that perpetuates gender-based norms and restrictions within Pashtun society. The sentence structure places a woman's autonomy in relation to a man's presence, emphasizing dependency and control. The syntax here constructs a gendered norm by using the phrase "له سري پرته" (without a man) as a condition that restricts a woman's behavior. This syntactical construction enforces the idea that a woman's actions are contingent upon male supervision or accompaniment, reinforcing traditional gender roles and suggesting that women cannot make independent decisions without male oversight. The use of "بايد" (should) in the sentence introduces a modality that implies obligation or necessity. This form of imperative syntax underscores a normative expectation rather than presenting it as a personal choice. By framing the restriction as a duty or requirement, the syntax enforces gendered expectations on women, perpetuating the notion that women's freedoms are constrained by societal rules rather than personal agency. The syntactical arrangement highlights a hierarchical relationship between genders. The phrase "بنځه بايد له سري پرته سفر ونکړي" implies a clear power dynamic where the woman's actions are regulated by the presence of a man. This syntactical construction reflects and reinforces a broader societal view that prioritizes male authority and control over female behavior, reinforcing systemic sexism within the language. In Pashtun society, traditional values often dictate gender roles and expectations. The syntax of this sentence mirrors these values by embedding them into the language structure. By formalizing these norms within the syntax, the language becomes a tool for perpetuating and institutionalizing gender inequality. The sentence does not just convey information but also serves as a vehicle for maintaining and reinforcing societal values. Such syntactical constructions influence how individuals perceive gender roles. When language consistently portrays women's actions as subject to male oversight, it contributes to shaping societal attitudes that view women as dependent and subordinate. This can affect how women are treated in various aspects of life, from personal freedoms to professional opportunities. In the context of Pashtun society, this syntactical sexism underscores the broader issues of gender inequality and the need for linguistic and societal change.

3. 'بنځه بايد خپل ميره خوشاله کړي' (Khza baid khpal miarha khushala kri) Translation: "A woman should please her husband."

The sentence "بنځه بايد خپل ميره خوشاله کړي" (Khza baid khpal miarha khushala kri), is structured to impose a specific role on women: **Subject:** "بنځه" (Khza) - "woman", **Modal verb:** "بايد" (baid) - "should", **Object/Complement:** "خپل ميره" (khpal miarha) - "her husband", **Verb:** "خوشاله کړي" (khushala kri) - "please". The syntax places the responsibility on the woman (subject) to fulfil a specific duty towards her husband (object). This structure reinforces traditional gender roles by prescribing an obligation solely for women, reflecting societal expectations where women are primarily responsible for ensuring their husbands' happiness. The use of the verb "خوشاله کړي" (khushala kri) underscores the notion that the woman's primary role is to please her husband, reflecting a power imbalance in gender roles. The sentence structure does not present a reciprocal or shared responsibility but rather places a unilateral obligation on women. The syntactic construction of the sentence serves to normalize and perpetuate traditional gender norms: By using "بايد" (baid), the sentence enforces a duty rather than a choice. This prescriptive approach enforces normative behaviors and societal expectations. The sentence does not include any mention of men having similar duties or obligations, thus reinforcing gender-specific roles where women are expected to prioritize their husband's happiness over their own. The sentence syntactically validates the expectation that women should conform to specific roles, thereby reinforcing traditional gender roles. To further illustrate the point, consider if the syntax were used to describe a man's duties, such as "سرى بايد خپلي بنځي ته احترام وړکړي" (Sarai baid khpalay khazai ta ihtiram warkri) - "A man should respect his wife." While this sentence also implies a duty, it is often less emphasized in traditional discourse compared to the expectations imposed on women. This comparison can highlight how syntactical structures reflect and reinforce societal biases. The sentence "بنځه بايد خپل ميره خوشاله کړي" exemplifies how syntactical choices in Pashto reinforce gendered expectations and societal norms. By placing the responsibility on women and framing it as an obligation, the sentence reflects traditional gender roles, contributing to ongoing gender inequality in Pashtun society.

4. 'بنځه بايد په کور کې پاتې شي' (Khza baid pa kor ke pata she) Translation: "A woman should stay at home."

The sentence "بنځه بايد په کور کې پاتې شي" (Khza baid pa kor ke pata she)" translates to "A woman should stay at home." The syntactic structure here is straightforward: subject (بنځه - woman), modal verb (بايد - should), and predicate (په کور کې پاتې شي - stay at home). This structure enforces a normative role by positioning the woman's place as being at home, which is implicitly framed as her primary or only role. The syntax reinforces traditional gender roles by suggesting a fixed, limited role for women, thus spreading a gendered division of labor and societal expectations. The use of the modal verb "بايد" (should) imposes an expectation or duty on the subject. In this case, the expectation is that a woman's appropriate role is to stay at home. This syntactic construction helps in propagating gender stereotypes by dictating what is considered acceptable behavior for women. By structuring the sentence in this way, the syntax endorses a view of women as primarily responsible for domestic duties, which aligns with traditional gender norms within Pashtun society. In contrast, a similar sentence about men, such as "سرى بايد کار وکړي" (Sarai baid kar wakri)," translates to "A man should work." The syntax here also uses the modal verb "بايد" (should) and a predicate that implies an active, productive role outside the home. But such a sentence is not used

in the Pashtun community about men so the syntactical differences reinforce a dichotomy where men are associated with public and productive roles. In contrast, women are associated with domestic and passive roles. The syntactical pattern used in "بنځه بايد په کور کې پاتې شي" (Khza baid pa kor ke pata she) reinforces hierarchical gender structures by framing women's roles as secondary and confined to the domestic sphere. This can continue the belief that women's primary contributions are in the home, thereby marginalizing their roles in other spheres such as education, employment, or leadership. This syntactic pattern, when repeated in various contexts, contributes to the normalization of such gendered expectations and helps perpetuate a system where women's roles are seen as limited and predefined. The syntactic structure of the phrase "بنځه بايد په کور کې پاتې شي" (Khza baid pa kor ke pata she)" plays a significant role in reinforcing gendered expectations and norms in Pashto. By positioning women's roles as primarily domestic and confining, the syntax contributes to the broader system of gender inequality within Pashtun society. Such syntactical patterns reveal how Pashto language uses and supports social norms and biases related to gender.

5. 'بنځه بايد د سړي اطاعت وکړي' (Khza baid da sarai ita'at wakri) Translation: "A woman should obey the man."

The sentence "بنځه بايد د سړي اطاعت وکړي" (Khza baid da sarai ita'at wakri), which translates to "A woman should obey the man," we can explore how syntactical structures in Pashto reflect gender-based hierarchies. The sentence follows a subject-auxiliary-object structure: "بنځه" (woman) [subject] + "بايد" (should) [auxiliary/modal verb] + "د سړي" (of the man) [object] + "اطاعت وکړي" (obey) [predicate/verb]. The syntactic arrangement places "سړی" (man) as the authority figure by positioning him as the recipient of the action ("obey"). This structure implicitly reinforces the notion that women should be subordinate to men. The use of "بايد" (should) indicates a normative expectation rather than a choice. The syntactic structure treats "سړي" (man) as the central authority figure. By focusing the action of obedience on the man, the syntax marginalizes women's agency and autonomy, suggesting their role is secondary to that of men. If the sentence were structured to reflect male behavior (e.g., "سړی بايد د بنځې اطاعت وکړي" - "A man should obey the woman"), the syntactical arrangement would challenge traditional gender roles and imply a reversal of authority. However, such structures are rare and less in Pashto's everyday discourse and are not socially accepted, highlighting the entrenched nature of the gendered syntax of Pashto Language. The prevalence of such syntactic structures in everyday language and formal education reinforces the socialization of gender roles from an early age. Children learning Pashto are exposed to these hierarchical structures, shaping their understanding of gender dynamics. The syntactical reinforcement of male authority through sentences like this contributes to the normalization of gender inequality in Pashtun society. It Shows a cultural narrative where women are seen as subordinate and expected to adhere to male authority. Such structures, we can gain insights into how language contributes to the maintenance of traditional gender roles and the broader implications for social attitudes towards gender equality. The syntax in these examples does not allow for alternative interpretations of gender roles. The phrases are constructed in such a way that they exclude the possibility of men taking on domestic duties or women assuming leadership roles within the household. By consistently structuring sentences in this way, the language itself becomes a tool that upholds and legitimizes gender inequalities. the syntactical constructions in these phrases are not neutral; they actively contribute to the reinforcement of gender roles within Pashtun society. By assigning specific duties and roles to men and women through syntax, the

language perpetuates a sexist worldview that limits the potential and roles of individuals based on their gender. Such structure highlights how syntax in Pashto plays a significant role in maintaining and normalizing gender inequality within the cultural context of Pashtun society.

Sexism in Pashto Mataloona or Naqloona, (Proverbs)

Proverbs are regarded as the most widespread form of folklore, present in every culture worldwide. Milner observed the "nearly universal distribution" of proverbs across the globe, regardless of time, location, level of technological and economic development, language, or culture (1969b:200; cf. Mieder, 2004, 2005). Proverbs can be defined through two primary approaches: structural and functional, which are elaborated upon in the following pages. However, it is important to note that scholars have long faced difficulties in providing a precise definition of what constitutes a proverb and distinguishing it from other phraseological units. Lau et al. (2004) highlight the irony that, while proverbs are often seen as the embodiment of simplicity and common sense, they are complex and challenging to define. This difficulty arises because proverbs do not fit neatly into a specific genre due to the wide variation in their form, origin, content, purpose, structure, and usage, leading some to question whether a single definition of a proverb is even possible (Moon, 1997:2).

Pashto, "Maatalona" (مَتَعَلُونَه) refers to proverbs or traditional sayings that often reflect the values, norms, and societal attitudes of Pashto-speaking communities. These proverbs can reveal underlying patterns of sexism, especially in how they portray gender roles and expectations. Such as;

1. "Khzha da kor dilay da, sarai da kor darwaza." **Translation: "The woman is the heart of the home; the man is the door of the home."**

The proverb "Khzha da kor dilay da, sarai da kor darwaza"), translates to "The woman is the heart of the home, the man is the door of the home." This proverb reflects gendered perceptions of roles within Pashtun society. The metaphorical representation of women as the "heart" suggests a central, yet passive, role. While the heart is vital, it is not an active participant in the daily functioning of the home; it is a supportive and sustaining entity. This implies that women are central to the home but are expected to remain in a supportive, rather than active, role. Similarly, the metaphor of men as the "door" implies an active role in guarding and controlling access. This metaphor suggests authority and power, positioning men as the gatekeepers and decision-makers in the household. The proverb reinforces traditional gender roles where women are expected to manage the interior, and emotional aspects of the household while men handle external and authoritative responsibilities. This dichotomy supports a hierarchical view where men hold authority and control, while women are relegated to a more passive, supportive role. women as the "heart," the proverb aligns with traditional expectations that women should focus on domestic responsibilities and emotional labor. It implies that women's primary role is to nurture and maintain the household environment, with less recognition of their contributions beyond this sphere. The depiction of men as the "door" aligns with expectations that men should protect and control. This reinforces the notion that men should be authoritative figures who manage and oversee the household, reinforcing gendered power structures. The proverb reinforces sexist views by implying that men and women have inherently different and unequal roles in society. The woman's role is portrayed as passive and supportive, while the man's role is portrayed as active and

authoritative. This supports the broader societal view that men should hold more power and decision-making authority, while women's contributions are valued mainly in terms of their support and care. Within Pashtun society, this proverb reflects and perpetuates traditional gender roles and power dynamics.

2. "Sarai da khzay hakim dey, khzha da saray ghulama dey." **Translation: "A man is the master of a woman, and a woman is a servant to her man."**

The Pashto proverb ("Sarai da khzay hakim dey, khzha da saray ghulama dey") translates to "A man is the master of a woman, and a woman is a servant to her man." This proverb exemplifies the gendered attitudes embedded in Pashto culture. The term "حكيم" (hakim) suggests wisdom and authority, whereas "غلامه" (ghulama) implies servitude and lack of autonomy. By juxtaposing these terms, the proverb perpetuates the notion that men inherently hold power and authority over women. The proverb reflects and normalizes gender inequality by depicting it as an established and unquestionable aspect of social relations. By presenting the idea that men are naturally the masters and women are naturally their servants, it reinforces traditional gender roles and discourages critical examination or challenge of these roles. In Pashtun society, where traditional values and norms are deeply ingrained, such proverbs serve as a cultural justification for maintaining gender disparities. The proverb not only reflects but also perpetuates the unequal power dynamics between men and women, contributing to the reinforcement of patriarchal structures. They contribute to a cultural environment where male dominance is accepted and female subservience is normalized. This can affect the way individuals view their roles within the family and society, potentially limiting opportunities for women and reinforcing their subordinate status. The proverb illustrates the deep-seated sexist attitudes prevalent in Pashto-speaking societies. It enforces traditional gender hierarchies and contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequality by normalizing the idea of male dominance and female subservience. Such proverbs provide insight into how cultural narratives sustain and justify unequal gender relations within Pashtun society.

3. "Khzha da kor shata khaira dey, sarai da kor makh te shayista dey." **Translation: "A woman is good behind the home, a man is handsome in front of the home."**

The Pashto proverb "Khzha da kor shata khaira dey, sarai da kor makh te shayista dey" (Translation: "A woman is good behind the home, a man is handsome in front of the home") reveals significant insights into the gendered perceptions and roles within Pashtun society. The proverb suggests that a woman's place and value are primarily associated with domestic responsibilities and being "behind the home." This reflects a traditional view where women's roles are confined to the private sphere, emphasizing their value in maintaining the household rather than participating in public or societal activities. Conversely, the proverb states that a man is considered "handsome" or valuable "in front of the home." This implies that men are appreciated for their presence and actions in the public or external domain, reinforcing the idea that men have a more prominent and valued role in society compared to women. The proverb contrasts the domestic and public spheres, attributing different values to each gender based on their associated roles. Women are valued for their domestic contributions, while men are valued for their public presence. This reflects a broader societal pattern where women's contributions are often undervalued or overlooked in comparison

to men's public achievements. By suggesting that women are only "good" when they are confined to the domestic sphere, the proverb reinforces restrictive gender norms. It implies that women's value is tied to their compliance with traditional domestic roles, discouraging their participation in broader societal roles. The proverb's portrayal of men as "handsome" or valuable in the public domain suggests a higher status or importance for men's activities outside the home. This elevation of men's public roles over women's domestic roles perpetuates gender inequality. In Pashtun society, such proverbs reflect and reinforce entrenched cultural norms and gender hierarchies. They serve to perpetuate traditional views of gender roles, influencing how individuals perceive and value both men and women based on these roles. Proverbial expressions like this play a role in social conditioning, shaping attitudes and expectations regarding gender roles from an early age. They contribute to the normalization of gender-based divisions of labor and the reinforcement of gender inequality. This proverb exemplifies how traditional Pashto Proverbs perpetuate sexist views by reinforcing rigid gender roles and valuing men's public contributions over women's domestic roles. Such proverbs help in understanding the cultural and societal attitudes that sustain gender inequality within Pashtun society.

4. "Khzha da saray da kor izzat dey." Translation: "A woman is the honor of a man's home."

The Pashto proverb "Khzha da saray da kor izzat dey", (translates to "A woman is the honor of a man's home.") This proverb reflects specific gender roles and societal attitudes toward women within Pashtun society. The proverb implies that a woman's value is intrinsically linked to her association with a man's home. It positions women as property or assets whose worth is defined by their relationship with men rather than their attributes or achievements. This reflects a patriarchal view where a woman's role and honor are perceived primarily in terms of how she contributes to or enhances a man's status. This suggests that a woman's primary role is to support the male figure in her life rather than pursue her own goals or aspirations. Such proverbs perpetuate restrictive gender roles that limit women's freedom and self-expression. They support the idea that women's contributions are valuable only in terms of their effect on men's status, which can marginalize women's autonomy and individuality. The proverb implies that a woman's moral and social worth is measured by her ability to uphold the honor of her male family members. This places an undue burden on women to maintain certain standards and behaviors to reflect positively on the men in their lives. This perspective can lead to the policing of women's behavior and reinforce norms that restrict women's freedom in personal and public spheres. It can also contribute to a culture where women are held accountable for the actions and reputation of men, rather than being judged on their own merits. This contrast highlights an unequal distribution of responsibility and value, where women's honor is directly tied to men's, while men's honor is seen as independent of women. This differentiation underscores the gender imbalance in societal expectations and values. It reinforces the idea that women's identities and worth are secondary to men's, contributing to systemic gender inequality.

5. Che pa khawand drana ye, pa tool kale dranu ye, ow che pa khawand spaka we, pa tool kali spaka we. A woman's social status is relative to her husband's treatment of her.

The Pashto Proverb "Che pa khawand drana ye, pa tool kale dranu ye, ow che pa khawand spaka we, pa tool kali spaka we.", translates "A woman's social status is relative to her husband's treatment of her." The proverb underscores that a woman's social status is contingent upon her husband's behavior. This reflects a societal norm where a woman's worth and respect in the community are directly linked to how she is treated by her husband. This externalizes a woman's identity and status to her relationship with a man, reinforcing a patriarchal view that a woman's value is dependent on her male counterpart. This view perpetuates the idea that a woman's standing is not inherent or autonomous but rather defined by her husband's actions. It implies that women lack independent social agency and that their social position is subject to male control. This reinforces gender inequality by suggesting that a woman's status is a reflection of her husband's treatment rather than her own qualities or achievements. This proverb reflects traditional Pashtun cultural norms where gender roles are clearly delineated, and a woman's status is largely determined by her relationship with men, especially her husband. Such proverbs often serve to reinforce societal expectations and perpetuate gender-based discrimination. By equating a woman's social value with her husband's treatment of her, this proverb contributes to a cycle of dependency and reinforces traditional gender roles that can limit women's opportunities and autonomy. It also reinforces the notion that women's worth is not self-determined but is defined by their interactions with men which affects gender dynamics within the society.

6. Buday da shaitan troor da. The old woman is a devil's aunt.

In Pashto, the proverb "Buday da shaitan troor da" translates to "The old woman is a devil's aunt." This expression reflects deep-seated cultural attitudes and biases, which are often rooted in societal stereotypes and prejudices. The proverb combines ageism and gender bias. The term "old woman" is pejoratively associated with negative traits, suggesting that elderly women are inherently troublesome or malevolent. This reflects a tendency to view older women in a negative light, devaluing their roles and experiences. Associating an old woman with a devil's relative intensifies the negative portrayal. It suggests that older women are not just unpleasant but are also linked to malevolent forces, reinforcing the stereotype of women as inherently problematic or wicked as they age. This proverb is a clear example of sexism, where the traditional wisdom embedded in proverbs perpetuates discriminatory views. In Pashtun society, proverbs are often used to convey cultural values and norms. This particular Proverb reinforces negative stereotypes about women's roles as they age, implying they become increasingly troublesome. The proverb contributes to the reinforcement of stereotypes about older women, suggesting that their worth and behavior diminish with age. This can lead to social exclusion and disrespect towards elderly women. Such proverbs may influence individuals' attitudes and interactions with older women, leading to biased treatment and reinforcing societal norms that marginalize them. such expressions are crucial for understanding how linguistic elements contribute to broader social attitudes and how they can perpetuate gender-based discrimination.

7. Che yawa we दौरا kha we, che dwe she samsare she, che dre she pa khandaq sara sware she. Translation. (When there is one woman in the home, she is good; when they are two, they are like crocodiles (fight); when they are three, they ride the walls and roofs of the house.) (I.e., more than one woman cannot live peacefully in one house)

This proverb reflects a negative stereotype about women's ability to cohabit peacefully. It suggests that women are inherently conflict-prone and incapable of maintaining harmony when they are in groups. This perpetuates a view that women are disruptive and antagonistic by nature. By implying that the presence of multiple women leads to chaos, the proverb reinforces traditional gender roles that depict women as problematic when not under the control of a single male authority. It implies that women's interactions are inherently problematic and need to be managed to avoid conflict. It indirectly supports the idea that male oversight is necessary to maintain order and harmony in the household. The use of the terms "crocodiles" and "ride the walls and roofs" is metaphorical, enhancing the image of women as disruptive forces. This language choice conveys a strong judgment about women's behavior, embedding a cultural bias into everyday language. Such proverbs reinforce and perpetuate gender biases, making it difficult for women to challenge or change these perceptions. They can contribute to a social environment where women's roles and behaviors are undervalued or misrepresented. By embedding these ideas in proverbs, such cultural narratives become entrenched in social norms and everyday practices. This can affect how women are treated in domestic and public spheres, reinforcing traditional gender roles and expectations.

8. Da duniya tolo na ghat darogh da de che dree khaze ghale naste way. The biggest lie of the world is that „three women were sitting quite“. (I.e., women cannot stop talking)

This proverb embodies a common stereotype that women are naturally loquacious and lack self-control when it comes to speaking. By suggesting that even a small group of women can't sit quietly, it reinforces the notion that women's behavior is predictable and uniform, reducing their individuality to a simplistic and negative trait. The proverb carries a dismissive and derogatory tone towards women, implying that their conversations are trivial or incessant. This contributes to the marginalization of women's voices in social, familial, and professional contexts, as it implies that their speech is not valuable or worth listening to. In Pashtun society, where honor and respect are highly valued, this saying undermines the dignity of women by portraying them as incapable of restraint or silence. It reflects the broader cultural tendency to view women through a lens of inferiority, where their behaviors are often judged more harshly than men's. This can affect women's self-perception, making them more likely to accept limitations on their behavior and expression, and also shapes how men perceive and interact with women. Such proverbs could be recounted in specific social settings to illustrate a point or as a humorous exaggeration. In either case, its use in conversation reinforces sexist attitudes, whether the intention is humorous or serious. Such expressions, we gain insight into the subtle ways language contributes to the maintenance of gender inequality in Pashtun society.

9. Da khazo khule sooray we. Women's mouths have no locks. (I.e., they cannot maintain secrets)

The proverb directly associates women with the inability to maintain confidentiality, suggesting that their speech is unguarded and uncontrolled. This reflects a view that tends to undermine women's credibility and trustworthiness. The metaphor of 'locks' implies that women lack self-restraint or discretion, qualities often valued and expected in men, which creates an unequal standard based on gender. Such proverbs contribute to reinforcing the patriarchal norms that govern Pashtun society. By repeatedly using this proverb in everyday discourse, society not only

perpetuates but also normalizes the idea that women are less reliable than men. This has real-world implications, affecting how women are perceived in both personal and professional contexts, potentially limiting their roles and responsibilities in society. This proverb also reflects the traditional roles assigned to women within Pashtun culture, where their speech and actions are often subject to strict scrutiny. It serves as a mechanism to control and silence women, reinforcing the belief that their opinions and voices are less valuable than those of men. It is a clear example of how language, specifically through proverbs, can encode and perpetuate sexist ideologies. The proverb not only reflects existing gender biases but also plays a role in maintaining and reinforcing the unequal power dynamics between men and women in Pashtun society. Such sayings are crucial for understanding the linguistic roots of sexism and for challenging these harmful stereotypes within the culture.

10. Da lonrho plar hamesha starhe we. A girl's" father is never at rest. (I.e., he worries about daughter's chastity and marriage)

The proverb highlights the deeply ingrained societal expectations and anxieties surrounding daughters in Pashtun culture. This proverb is rooted in the idea that a father carries a continuous burden of worry regarding his daughter's chastity and marriage, signifying the intense social pressure placed on maintaining a girl's honor. The term "starhe" (opposite *rest*) metaphorically suggests a state of peace or ease, which the proverb implies a father can never achieve due to the constant vigilance required to protect his daughter's reputation. This reflects the patriarchal norms that dominate Pashtun society, where a daughter's value is closely tied to her purity and the family's honor. The proverb reinforces the idea that a father's primary role is to safeguard this honor, often at the expense of the daughter's autonomy. It underscores the gendered expectations that place the responsibility of maintaining honor solely on the female members of the family, while also placing the emotional and social burden on the father. In this way, the proverb not only perpetuates the control over women's lives but also subtly justifies the societal constraints imposed on them. It is a clear example of how language, through proverbs like this, can reinforce and perpetuate sexist attitudes within Pashtun society. These sayings help in understanding the underlying societal norms and biases that influence gender relations in Pashto-speaking communities.

Conclusion

The Pashto language, deeply intertwined with the cultural fabric of Pashtun society, reveals significant gender biases that reflect and reinforce traditional norms and expectations. Through a detailed analysis of semantics, morphology, syntax, and proverbs, this research has shown how these linguistic elements contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality. Semantic analysis demonstrated that the same words or phrases can carry vastly different connotations depending on the gender they refer to. Words associated with men often convey strength, authority, and positive qualities, while those linked to women frequently bear negative or diminished meanings. This disparity in meaning reflects broader societal biases that undervalue women's contributions and experiences. Morphological analysis revealed how the structure of words in Pashto reinforces gender roles. The addition of gender-specific suffixes often diminishes the status of women, as seen in professional titles and other terms. This morphological sexism underscores the perception of women as secondary to men, perpetuating traditional power dynamics within the society. The syntactical analysis highlighted how sentence structures and pronoun usage in Pashto contribute

to gender bias. The language's default male interpretation and the imposition of gender-specific roles through syntactical choices reinforce the dominance of male authority and the subjugation of women. Such patterns normalize and legitimize traditional gender roles, limiting women's autonomy and reinforcing societal expectations. Finally, the examination of proverbs revealed how these cultural expressions encode and perpetuate sexist attitudes. Pashto proverbs often depict women in subordinate roles, reinforcing the idea that women are naturally suited to the private, domestic sphere, while men belong in the public, authoritative domain. These proverbs not only reflect but also shape societal perceptions of gender, contributing to the marginalization of women. In Short, the Pashto language serves as both a mirror and a tool for perpetuating gender inequalities within Pashtun society. The biases embedded in its semantics, morphology, syntax, and proverbs reinforce traditional gender roles and contribute to the maintenance of a patriarchal social order. Addressing these linguistic biases is essential for challenging and ultimately dismantling the deep-rooted gender inequalities that persist within Pashtun society.

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