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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Language and Gender: A Pragmatic Discourse of Convenience Inscriptions

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines how the discourse of language and gender are employed in describing convenient inscriptions in different locations across the world. The study set out to find out, among other things, how gender is portrayed through convenience inscriptions; the specific language devices used in the selected inscriptions and also determining the contextual interpretation of these inscriptions. Making references to the difference and multimodal discourse analysis frameworks, the researchers employed a qualitative eclectic approach in the description and analysis of the data, which were extracted through personal screenshots from Twitter. The findings from the study show that convenience inscriptions have glorified communicative worth and gender portrayal through a variety of themes such as sex, loquaciousness and sports. Also, the study shows that language devices such as text/textuality, symbolism, visual imagery and satire/sarcasm play significant roles in the make-up of convenience inscriptions and their relevance to gender.

**KEYWORDS**

Language, Gender, Discourse, Convenience, Inscription

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### 1. Introduction

Long before now, the ancient people developed various means of communicating feelings, thoughts, ideas and customs by placing inscriptions on surfaces. Inscriptions, which are broadly termed 'Graffiti', include all kinds of drawing, writing, sketching, mark and signs placed on walls or in public places. The Encyclopedia Americana defines an inscription as words, letters or signs written or painted on long lasting materials. Philips (1996) defines an inscription as something written on a wall or any other surface, usually in public places, by those who are not professional artists. Based on Philips' definition, one would consider that inscriptions are sometimes written by unprofessional artists, but inscriptions are also written by professional artists. This is because most inscriptions used for advertising goods are written by professional artists. Philips further explains that inscriptions are drawings on a flat surface which originally refers to the marks that are found on ancient Roman architecture. Inscriptions are among the different ways used in ancient times to direct the public to a desired destination. The ancient Egyptians and Greeks are among the people who are known to have used inscriptions at an early period and have preserved many of these ancient inscriptions.

Language, as an inseparable part of human life, encompasses all forms of inscriptions for communicative purposes. One of the foremost definitions of language is that of Sapir (1921), who captures it as a purely human method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. Marpaung (2015) describes language as the best means of self-expression, both in oral and written form. The need to communicate is a powerful and consuming kind, with language serving as the vehicle that man has devised to satisfy such a need. The kind of language that a man uses, hears or reads shapes, to a surprising extent, the world he lives in. Without language, there would be no society, and without society, man, a social animal, would not exist. Thus, language use is crucial. Language is not verbal alone; it equally involves semiotic properties placed side by side to achieve some form of communication.

Pragmatics, as an area of language study, focuses on how language is used based on contextual underpinnings. Through pragmatics, the language used in any social context can be analyzed. Pragmatics and its relation to language and gender is the foundation upon which this study is built. Levinson (1983) opines that pragmatics studies the relationship between language and contexts that are basic to an account of language understanding. Following Austin (1962), pragmatics focuses on the conditions which permit speakers and writers to achieve what they want to achieve by bringing about certain modifications to behaviors, knowledge, attitude, or beliefs of others. This pragmatic use of language has birthed what certain language scholars regard as language and gender.

The term 'gender' is seldomly misconstrued by certain people who consider it the same as 'sex'. Hence, it is important to clearly state that sex is designated based on biology, while gender is socially and psychologically constructed by the process of interactions in the family, social and educational settings. According to the words of Rahmi (2015), gender is not something we have but something we do; something we perform. Thus, sex is a biological categorization based on reproductive potentials, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. This entails that sex is something that comes with the birth of a person. From certain characteristics, we can identify one as either male or female, such as genitals and reproductive organs. However, gender is visualized as something created by humans socially and physiologically founded on certain beliefs and rules when they come in contact with or communicate with each other. For instance, boys are meant to join their fathers in the workshop, while girls are meant to go into the kitchen with their mothers. Girls are generally expected to dress in the typical feminine way and be polite, accommodating and nurturing, while boys are generally expected to be strong, aggressive and bold. Also, pink is considered feminine, whereas blue is considered masculine. These obviously indicate how parents and society expect children to act, speak, dress, groom, conduct, behave and present themselves during their upbringing process. As the world may have it today, one can identify with either of these genders: Male, Female, Intersex, Trans, Non-conforming, Personal or Eunuch.

Language and gender refer to the relationship between the language of not just male and female but other gender identities. It equally reflects their different living styles and attitude. Thus, the culture of a people legalizes their values, expectations, meanings, patterns of behavior and communication in its society. With regard to gender, a lot of structures have been formed. Gender is widely and frequently presented on television, in magazines and in our personal experiences. In the mainstream media, women are assumed to undertake home-making, care-giving and subservient roles. Conversely, men are represented as leaders or breadwinners in the home. Meanwhile, Rahmi (2015) mentions that, in linguistics, the term 'gender' refers to the grammatical categories that index sex in the structure of human language

The connection between language and gender could be traced to the late 1960s and early 1970s when public women's movements and feminist campaigns emerged on personal names and on feminist philosophy. In that era, the writers or authors wrote articles and books regarding two important issues that were of the nature and significance of gender bias in language and gender differences in language use. However, at that time, feminist language researchers argued that men had more power to control languages because most philosophers, orators, politicians, grammarians, linguists, and lexicographers were men.

The relationship between gender and language is represented in the different men's and women's talk patterns, which have been expressed in Proverbs and fiction worldwide. They have shown women's verbosity in expressing language. A few of these proverbs and fiction are presented below.

### **1.1 In proverbs:**

- a. Three women make a market (Sudan).
- b. Women are nine times more talkative than men (Hebrew).
- c. Men talk like books; women lose themselves in details (China).
- d. A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail (England).
- e. The tongue is babbling, but the head knows nothing about it (Russia).

#### **1.1.1 In fictions:**

- a. Silence gives the proper grace to women (Sophocles, Ajax).
- b. How hard it is for women to keep counsel (Shakespeare, in Julius Caesar).
- c. Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in a woman (Shakespeare, in King Lear).

A lot on language has been gendered. This is usually witnessed in public places like railway stations, motor parks, classroom settings, church settings, etcetera. Convenience is established to serve a particular function and to afford a particular service. Convenience facilities include catering facilities, water facilities, educational facilities, and toilet facilities; such as public lavatories, toilets, restrooms, washrooms, and comfort stations. These facilities are purposively built to meet the physical and emotional needs of their users. Moving on, the study focuses on inscriptions on toilet conveniences. These facilities are purposively built to meet the physical and emotional needs of their users. Moving on, the study focuses on inscriptions on toilet conveniences. These inscriptions, most times, appear in the form of drawings or graphics placed on the wall or door entrance of toilet conveniences,

designed to direct or inform users on which toilet to use based on the gender they identify with. In light of this, the study is aimed at examining how gender is portrayed in inscriptions placed on toilet conveniences.

### **1.2 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine how gender is portrayed through convenience inscriptions.
2. Determine the target gender of the convenience inscriptions.
3. Specify the language devices explored in the convenience inscriptions.
4. Derive the contextual interpretations of the convenience inscriptions.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How is gender portrayed through these convenience inscriptions?
2. Who are the targets of these inscriptions?
3. What language devices are explored in these inscriptions?
4. What contextual interpretations can be derived from these inscriptions?

### **1.4 Methodology**

This study utilizes a qualitative eclectic approach to describe the data on convenience inscriptions. The data, which are graphical in nature, were extracted through personal screenshots from Twitter- the micro-blogging social media application. Twenty (20) samples were purposively selected for analysis. These screenshots were analyzed using a table where the images were juxtaposed with the language device(s) they represent and their contextual interpretation. Linguistic devices such as text and textuality, visual imagery, symbolism and satire/sarcasm. The researchers then situated the findings from the analysis within relevant conceptual, empirical and theoretical underpinnings.

## **2. Theoretical Frameworks**

### **2.1 The Difference Theory**

Deborah Tannen propounded this theory in 1990. This theory states that the language of men and women is simply different. Neither is superior; it is just that the style of speech adopted by a female is in contrast to that of a male. According to this theory, men and women were not socialized in the same way. They possess and exhibit different sociolinguistic subcultures, which are regarded as male subcultures and female subcultures, respectively. Feminists have argued about the place of women's conversation. In their words, they say that the pattern of women's speech is different from men's. Moreover, women are considered to have some superiority in some linguistic domains. Thus, women and men occupy different subcultures and develop differently without an equal communication style. Men and women have different perceptions of friendly conversations, different rules for engagement in it, and different rules for interpreting them. Lakoff (1973) believes that the distinction between men's and women's language is a symptom of a problem in our culture and not primarily a problem itself. Maltz and Borker (1982) suggest areas in which men and women possess different conversational rules. They say that the difference can be seen in the minimal response given in response to another's talk. Also, women tend to use questions for conversational maintenance, whereas men tend to use questions as requests for information. Women also link previous utterances to current utterances explicitly, while men ignore them. Women use verbal aggressiveness in a personal and negative way. For men, it helps to organise conversational flow. In women's conversations, topics are developed, expanded, and topic shifts are gradual. However, men tend to stay on topic as narrowly defined and consequently make an abrupt topic shift. In problem sharing and advice giving, women tend to discuss and share their problems to reassure one another and listen mutually. Men, however, interpret the introduction of a problem as a need for a solution, and they tend to act as experts, offering advice rather than sympathizing or sharing their own problems. Scholars criticized this theory by arguing that it only pays attention to women's contributions to language but ignores the social reality that women and men are considered unequal.

### **2.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis.**

Multimodal discourse analysis developed by Kress and Leeuwen is one of the recent models in semiotic analysis. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) extracts from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics in the analysis of semiotic language and its signification. As a semiotic approach, a multimodal analysis accounts for all modes in a communicative event, and it encompasses the linguistic features of a text, which are usually regarded as speech actions and non-linguistic features such as images, symbols, colours and pictures. This theory advocates that sign systems outside language are equally sources of meaning as compared to Halliday (1985). This theory is an approach that looks at multiple modes of communication, such as text, color, and images. It is a method of

discursive analysis that looks at not just how individual modes communicate but how they interact with one another to create semiotic meaning. Kress (2010) states further that using three modes in one sign - writing and image, and colour as well has real benefits. Each mode does a specific thing: image shows what takes too long to read, and writing names that would be difficult to show. Color is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message. Therefore, looking at multiple modes at once elicits a more nuanced and complex analysis, especially when looking at online environments.

### **2.3 Relevant Concepts of the Study.**

#### **2.3.1 Categories of Gender in Language.**

Hellinger and Bunmann (2001), as cited in Rahmi (2015), outline four categories used in representing men and women in language.

##### a. Lexical Gender.

Femaleness and maleness are usually used as a property of gender in linguistics. This is illustrated in English personal nouns like mother, sister, son and boy. Lexically, the meaning of mother and sister represents femaleness, while son and boy relate to maleness. Thus, such nouns are considered gender-specific nouns, which can either be female-specific or male-specific. However, certain nouns are considered "gender indefinite" or "gender neutral". This is because they do not specify the sex of the referent. Examples of these nouns are citizens, patients, students, passer-by, individuals, etcetera. Lexical gender is crucial in determining the form of terminologies, address terms and a number of personal pronouns in all languages.

##### b. Grammatical Gender.

Grammatical gender consists of three gender classes which include masculine, feminine and neuter. However, these classes are not evident in all languages. Grammatical gender is a fundamental part of a noun that determines the kind of word class, such as articles, adjectives, verbs, numerals or prepositions that can follow a noun. In English, it is common to refer to an animal using the second person possessive pronoun 'it'. However, the pronoun can be changed to personal pronouns of 'he' or 'she' when the sex of the animal is known.

##### c. Referential Gender.

This category of gender can be realized in linguistic expressions that are used in non-linguistic reality. This implies that a word can change its basic function grammatically and lexically to be feminine, masculine or neuter when idiomatically used. Most languages use generic masculine words to refer to both females and males. Thus, masculine nouns are used more often to represent male and female lexicons in linguistic expressions, while feminine nouns are used specifically to express female nouns only. For instance, in French, minister 'minister'; in Arabic, muhami 'lawyer'; in Russian, Vrac 'physician', are masculine words used to refer to males, females or another whose gender is not contextually known. In English, 'he' or 'she' is usually used to refer to an unknown third-person singular.

##### d. Social Gender.

This category of gender is viewed as the social separation between masculine and feminine roles and character traits. It means that personal nouns are formed specifically for social purposes in the absence of any single difference between feminine and masculine words when examined lexically and grammatically. For instance, lots of high-status occupational terms like engineer, lawyer, surgeon, scientist, pilot, etcetera are usually referred to the male-specific second person singular pronoun 'he' in the English language. Conversely, the female-specific third person singular pronoun 'she' is sometimes used to refer to low-status occupational titles such as school teacher, nurse, receptionist, vendor, secretary, etcetera.

#### **2.3.2 Gender Stereotypes in Language.**

A lot of gender stereotypes take place when language is produced. Even some scholars wrote about them. According to Otto Jepsen, when women speak, they will produce soft-spokenness and irrational topic shifts that make no sense. He supported his idea by referring to proverbs, witticisms, and the opinions of authors and fictional characters. Certain characteristics have been used to stereotype women. These characteristics include vocal and verbal aggressiveness, scolding, gossiping, nagging, etc.

Stereotypically, women are also represented as language users in television situation comedy, newspaper cartoons even horror novels. To create humorous things, women are often represented as nagging and have excessive and never-ending speech. In James Herbert's "The Survivor", women are regarded with empty chatter by talking trivially and emotionally. Their talk is considered nonsensical or lacking in content. Meanwhile, men are represented as creatures who can speak very well and intelligently in public, and they are logical or rational. These exposures through media and publishers certainly enhanced these stereotypes to be spread widely. As a result, these kinds of stereotypes may be believed as the truth by many people in a certain society about how men and women talk.

Furthermore, some words are used to represent men and women in terms of styles of talk. Women are classified with communication styles of sympathy, rapport, listening, private, connection, supportive, and intimacy. However, men's

communication style is considered as problem-solving, reporting, lecturing, public, status, oppositional and independent. Women are considered to have a sense of nurturing so that they can be good mothers, while men show power and position in public.

Also, women are considered to have disfluency in speech, unfinished sentences, and no logical speech order. They are approval seekers who are sometimes not sure about their own statements. They speak less than men in mixed group meetings and employ co-operative strategies, while men employ competitive strategies.

### **2.3.3 Language Devices that Portray Gender in Discourse.**

Joshua (2020) explains that discourse is used to describe an extended stretch of language beyond the boundary of the sentence. Discourse involves how information is packaged, the flow of thought through time, the communicative and social goals of the speaker, the presumed knowledge of the audience and even more. Language devices that portray gender in a number of contexts are text and textuality, visual imagery, symbolism and satire.

#### **i. Text and Textuality.**

A "text" may be seen as the weaving or a network of analytical, conceptual, logical and theoretical relations that is woven with the threads of language. On the other, "textuality" is defined as the complex set of features that texts must have to be considered texts (Neubert & Shreve, 1992). Textuality is a property that a complex linguistic object assumes when it reflects certain social and communicative constraints. Text and textuality are interwoven. A text can be observed as a cultural event which is continuously interpreted by numerous individualities. Textuality forms that joint element that reveals the common place where the writer and his reader's intention meet by symbolizing a pragmatic reference through which real texts meet their target readers. The text stands out in any graphic communication to relay the author's intention first.

#### **ii. Visual Imagery.**

An image is a mental pictorial description of something abstract or not present. Visual imagery pertains to graphics, visual scenes, pictures, or the sense of sight. Visual imagery is a memory technique that involves constructing mental images for communication or learning new information in order to enhance improved understanding and recall of information in future. It describes what we see in comic books, images, paintings, or images directly experienced through the narrator's eyes. Visual images may contain colours, shapes, sizes and/or patterns. The collaboration of visual images and texts in graphics enhances the easy and quicker decipherability of texts.

#### **iii. Symbolism.**

Symbolism is the art and practice of using symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are distinct from their literal sense. Symbols, oftentimes, represent something not clearly stated. The use of symbols to represent gender is not recent. Gender symbols are ways of representing a particular gender identity through a unique symbol. These symbols are usually graphic designs, such as the Venus symbol for females and the Mars symbol for males. These symbols are not general. One can make a choice of the symbol he or she identifies with to represent his/her/ they gender. A pride flag is used to represent the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) family. Fruit, vegetables and body parts are not left out. Fruits and vegetables such as cabbages are conceptualized as heads, figs as vaginas, carrots or cucumbers as penises, and olives or eggs as testes. Body parts like the vagina, breast, penis, buttocks and testicles, etc., are also symbolized in one way or the other. With these symbols, authors are able to encode their intentions and leave it to their target readers to deduce meaning from the symbols.

#### **iv. Satire/Sarcasm.**

Satire, here, is the representation of gender through humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule. It strives to communicate gender ideas in a funny way by using silly or exaggerated language. Communication through verbal and nonverbal cues can use irony or sarcasm to express the intended point. One can use the characteristics of any individual to satirically represent their gender. Using irony and ridicule to describe one's gender keeps the target in a light mood. Satire can show how a particular gender expresses feelings, thoughts, emotions, or ideas reservedly or exaggeratively.


### **2.4. Empirical Studies & Relevance of Present Study.**

Achi (2010) examined the pragma-semiotic signification system in students' graffiti. He observed the totality of sign systems in linguistic and non-linguistic elements. Leaning on speech act theory, he determined that students' graffiti are verdictive, exersitive, commissive, behavitive and expositive. He also accounted for the perlocutionary effect of students' graffiti on their targets.

Another was Mohammed's (2020) observations on the differences between men's and women's language. He elucidated the variations in language and gender through time. To him, gender used in the language before now was restricted to the grammatical features of the difference between feminine and masculine in the morphology of most languages. The findings were that: women pronounced words better than men with better abilities; while women often speak in a high-pitched voice, men speak with falling intonation to exert confidence and, sometimes, power. There are also vocabulary differences in colour words, adjectives, adverbs, swear words and expletives, diminutives and pronominal usage.

However, Little or no attention has been paid to the pragmatic discourse of convenience inscriptions through the lens of language and gender studies. This is the lacuna this study intends to fill.

### 3. Data Presentation and Analysis

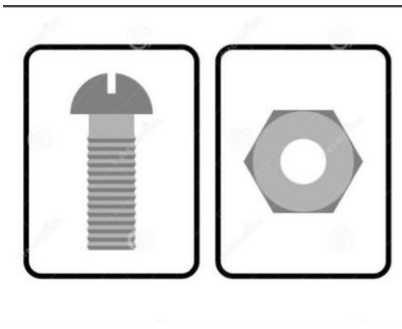
| S/No | Data  | Language devices  | Contextual Interpretation   |
|------|---|-------------------|---|
| 1.   |    | Textuality/Satire | <p>The convenience inscriptions in the datum have textual content. Food terms, as seen on the doors in the picture are used to target the male and female gender. On the first door, 'Eggs' describe a woman's egg cells also called ova or oocytes which are usually fertilized by a sperm. The shape of the peach fruit is akin to the shape of a typical female buttocks as females are created to be curvier than men. So, the first door represents a female convenience. 'Sausages' and 'bananas' represent the penis, signifying the door for the male convenience. The use of these food items to represent gender-based convenience inscriptions may appear offensive to some because of the inherent theme of stereotyping. For instance, banana is as well- known food for monkeys and has been used provocatively on several occasions to refer to the black race. In contrast, some other users may find these textual inscriptions on the doors of convenience as simply hilarious (satirical).</p> |
| 2.   |  | Textuality        | <p>'Restroom' is a room for one to relieve oneself when pressed. Grammatical gender is observed in the use of disjunctive expressions to relay the message. The disjunctive pronoun, 'whomever', is usually used for animate entities, while the adverbial phrase 'all goods', used for inanimate entities, indicate that anyone, male, female and others, can have access to the convenience. However, these expressions may appear demeaning to some users, in that, even animals or pets can use the same conveniences human beings use.</p>   |
| 3.   |  | Satire/Sarcasm    | <p>The inscriptions in the datum apparently suggest that the convenience can be accessed by male and female respectively. 'Gents' is an abbreviation for gentlemen, while 'Ladies' refer to women. 'DO EPIC SHIT' satirically tells of men's nature to try crazy things that pushes them out of their comfort zone. The use of the word 'shit' there also suggests the way men use the toilet. Usually, men would not care how they defecate in the toilet; they could fart</p>   |



uncontrollably as they defecate and wouldn't care if it makes unpleasant sounds that could be heard by a passerby, thus, the use of the expression 'epic shit' for the door indicating the male convenience. However, women are more 'courteous' with their use of the convenience and would most times not want to offend the sensibilities of others thus, the use of a more considerate expression- 'smile you're losing weight'

to indicate the door for the female convenience. Also, the expression 'smile you're losing weight' satirically make an illustration of women's nature of always using the mirror in the restroom to confirm if they feel chubby.

4.



Symbolism

The first symbol in the datum is called 'Screw' and the second is called 'nut'. Ordinarily, a screw is an engineering tool used to fasten two or more elements, while, a nut is a piece of metal with a hole usually screwed onto a bolt. In this context, screw represent the male genital organ and nut represent the female one. The door with the screw represents the male convenience while that of the nut indicates that of the female.

5.



Visual Imagery/ Text

The use of visual images to portray gender sends a clearer message to the author's target. The datum is however, a combination of a visual image and text. The image is inscribed in such a way that two different genders are joined. The text, 'WE DON'T CARE', coupled with the visual image entails that anyone can use the convenience regardless of gender identity or expression.

6.

Visual Imagery/ Text/ sarcasm

The visual images indicate that the convenience is targeted to two different genders- male and female. The text 'MAN' specify that only men can have access into the first room. However, 'THING MAN PUT PENIS IN' refer to the female genital organ, meaning that it is reserved for



females alone. The textual inscription could be considered as both demeaning and sarcastic to the female gender as the inscription could have also been simply written as – female.

7.

Textuality



'MANGOES' is textual description comprising two words- MAN and GOES. The inscription illustrates that only men can go into the first door while the second door comprises a short phrase- NO MANGOES. This indicates literally that 'NO MAN is allowed into that door (NO MANGOES). There is a deliberate joining of the two words for literary aesthetics.

8.

Satire/Sarcasm



'BLA' implies the use of one word at a time. Whereas, 'BLA...' imply so much wordiness. This expression is satirically used to ridicule and create humor. For the male gender, words are usually few and straightforward, while the female gender is usually verbose. It could also imply that female speeches tend to be disorganized as compared to that of the male gender

9.

Textuality/Satire

Everyone knows what 'BALLS' refer to, but in this context, it presents a different point of view. 'BALLS' here, is used to describe the male gender, whereas, 'NO BALLS' describes the female gender. The datum is a blend of text and satire. The former describes the male gender in a good light. It labels the male gender with positive attributes like courage, bravery, fearless, etc., while the later negatively





attributes the female gender as weaklings, uncourageous, fearful, etc.

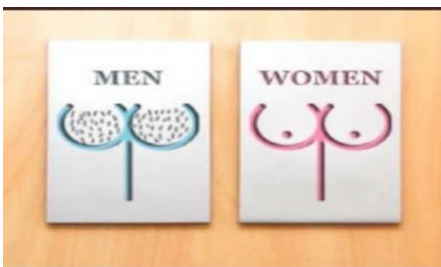
10.



Visual Imagery

The visual images used to encode the message contain a description of a carnivorous animal's head and a human body. The first image uses a parrot to represent the female gender. As we all know, the parrot is a bird that talks too much. So, the female gender is depicted as talkative unable to bridle their tongue. However, the second image presents the male gender as a more reserved and observant animal.

11.



Visual Imagery

The visual images represent the body part of the male and female gender respectively. The first image is a description of the scrotum which only men have, while the second image describes the breast which only women possess.

12.



Visual Imagery

The message embedded in this datum is not specific. It apparently gives access to any one, regardless of gender identity and expression, or age. The visual images on the datum are a representative of the female, male, transgender, etc., accompanied by texts in order to make the message clearer and more understandable. After using the convenience, the users are advised to wash their hands. Washing of hands is generally known and accepted as an after-toilet etiquette.

13.

Visual Imagery

Men are widely stereotyped as lovers of football. Most men are passionate about this game. On the contrary, women are widely stereotyped to enjoy shopping. The visual image paints a picture of men, always thinking of football, and women, thinking of shopping always. The images clearly distinguished a male



convenience from that of a female with the widely-believed activities that both genders individually like.

14.



Visual Imagery

In this visual image, vulgar expressions were used to deliver the desired message. The targets of this convenience are the male, female, and intersex gender. The first imagery captures two individuals having intercourse while sitting in the water closet is clearly not allowed. The reason for not allowing such positions may be to avoid damages to the convenience facilities. However, the second captures the individuals in a safer position and this is allowed. This indicates that the convenience facility is not gender-specific as anyone is free to use the facility.

15.



Textuality

In the datum, there are three doors with the inscriptions, Ladies, Men, and Colored. Thus, the use of the convenience facility is targeted at female, male and LGBTQ, respectively. The convenience rooms are restricted to the particular gender anyone identifies with. As common knowledge, the rainbow flag is the symbol of the LGBTQ rights movement. This is the reason why the text 'coloured' is used to signify convenience for LGBTQ.

16.



Symbolism

The symbols used in portraying gender in the datum are a bomb and forest fire. A bomb is like an instrument of destruction, while a forest fire is an unplanned outrageous fire that burns in a natural area such as a forest. Here, the bomb could represent the female gender. Females are usually verbose. They could sometimes lack control of their feelings, thoughts and emotions with the male folk, which, when not checked, could cause a flare of the unexpected. On the other hand, the forest fire could represent a male's reaction to a female's verbal misdoings.

17.



Satire

It is a behavioral thing for women to always think they are right. Even when they know they aren't, they tend to sternly claim the right grounds for their erroneous ideas. This satirically ridicules the character of most women. Thus, the inscription, "MEN TO THE LEFT BECAUSE WOMEN ARE ALWAYS RIGHT".

18.



Symbolism

In this datum, the author utilizes inanimate objects of drinking as actors and symbols to portray gender. The gender identities represented are the male and female gender, respectively. A "bottle" is used as the male actor, whereas a "glass cup" acts as the female gender. The choice of these objects as symbols for the portrayal of these gender identities could be traced from the drinking style of men and women. In bars and restaurants, most men tend to drink directly from their bottles, probably, to exude their masculinity; however, most women or ladies prefer to drink from their glass cups, thus, showing of their feminine attributes. Provision for other gender expression is not made. Also, the position these objects are placed on the image also symbolizes the shape of the male penis and the shape of the female vagina.

19.



Visual Imagery

Sporting activities and modelling require fitness. This way, one can keep fit and burn calories either through sporting exercises or enrolling into a modelling agency that subjects one to certain rules and diet. In the datum, a "sportsman" is used to represent the male gender. Conversely, a "model" is used to represent the female gender. This choice of convenience inscription could thrive from the fact that most men keep their body, mind, and soul fit through exercises and derive pleasure in sporting events. However, women who are interested in losing weight or keeping fit could choose to get a modelling career to enhance and showcase their bodily features

20.



Symbolism

A knot, as made visible in the datum, can be used to symbolize diverse gender identity. Knots are usually in the form of strings, ropes or clothing made for any particular purpose. In this case, knotted ropes are used for gender convenience. Looking at the datum, one of the ropes is tightly knotted to the door, while the other seems to be loose and round in its knotting pattern. The tightly knotted rope with a tail is used to represent the male gender. On the other hand, the round shaped loosely knotted rope is used to represent the female gender. This does not give room for other gender identities.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the data presented in the preceding section indicates that convenience inscriptions have glorified communicative worth and gender portrayal is possible through them. The analysis of the twenty convenience inscriptions and the ensuing results supports the claim of Philips (1996) that graffiti possesses massive communicative significance. The adoption of the multimodal discourse model has apparently enabled and uncovered a more complex but unified understanding of what these inscriptions are embodied with, their interacting elements and their significance.

The analysis of the data reveals, firstly, that convenience inscription are designed to portray gender differently. The difference in the portrayal of gender illustrates and affirms that men and women are socialized in far-apart manners. This is in line with Tannen's Difference theory (1990) which states that the language of men and women is simply different and the cultural patterning of both genders is without an equal communicative style. Language is not biologically transmitted based on individual genital make-up, but it is culturally transmitted, and every culture, made by man, exists and transmits itself through language. The difference in the portrayal of gender, as observed in data 1,3,6,12,15,16,17,18,19 and 20, indicates that these inscriptions were created and designed to inform users on which convenience room is to be utilized according to their genital setting. The analysis also reveals that inscriptions portray gender through a variety of themes. The expressive nature of language gives an opportunity for both social and non-social conformations. This agrees with McCormick (2005), who argues that in institutions where formality and structure are privileged, graffiti offers the opportunity to break away from the rigidity to create space for a more organized discourse by inviting uninhibited and uncensored discussions that are often rare in scholarly writing. Therefore, themes such as sex, as seen in data 6 and 14, loquaciousness in data 8, 10, 16 and 17 and sports in 13 and 19, were employed to portray gender differently on the convenience inscriptions.

From the foregoing, it can be overtly deduced that the targets of the inscriptions are not the same. Thus, the target genders witnessed from the data include male, female, LGBTQ and neuter. The data in 1,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,16,17,18,19 and 20 reveals that the male and female gender were the most targets because they are widely accepted in most societies. However, little attention is given to the other gender, as observed in data 14 and 15, which display inscriptions targeted at the LGBTQ family, and data 2,5 and 12, which are targeted at the neuter gender.

It is also observed that language devices such as text/textuality, symbolism, visual imagery and satire/sarcasm play significant roles in the make-up of the convenience inscriptions and their relevance to gender. Text and textuality are interwoven and, thus, play a crucial role in the structure of inscriptions. It involves written symbols, letters and words that encapsulate the author's intention and the context of use. Text and textuality are used in data 1,2,5,6,7,8, and 15; however, this device is often times complemented with other devices like visual imagery and satire. The language device of symbolism employed in data 4, 16, 18 and 20 showed how symbols like a forest fire, bomb, cup, screw and nut were used not in their literal sense but in non-literal ways to convey meanings left for users to deduce. Visual imagery was also used for packaging inscriptions in a pictorial way. Another language device supporting this device is text which enhances the easy and quick deciphering of visual images. The data in 5,6,10,11,12,13,14, and 19 showed how the language device of visual imagery was utilized. Lastly, satire or sarcasm was used to create some sense of humour, exaggeration, irony or ridicule in order to express an intended message. The data in 1,3,6,8,9 and 17 revealed how satire was used for packaging convenience inscriptions and portraying gender.

Every convenience inscription presented was descriptively analysed through pragmatic and contextual interpretations of what they entail. In pragmatic analysis, one pays attention to the context of language use and not the ordinary use of language. Contextual interpretation of the data uncovered the in-depth and hidden features which cannot be figured out on the surface and also relate to gender.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study undertook a pragmatic discourse of inscriptions placed on convenience facilities (toilets). The objectives of the study were to examine how gender is portrayed through the convenience inscriptions, determine the target gender of the convenience inscriptions, specify the language devices explored in the convenience inscriptions and derive the contextual interpretations of the convenience inscriptions. The study relied on the expressive function of language and how this function determines the application of language to gender studies. Through the analysis of the online-sourced data, the study reveals that convenience inscriptions are designed to portray gender differently. This difference in the portrayal of gender illustrates and affirms that the language of men and women is significantly different and the cultural patterning of both genders is without an equal communicative style. This work also found out that the convenience inscriptions had four targets- males, females, LGBTQ and neuter and that language devices such as text/textuality, symbolism, visual imagery, and satire/sarcasm play significant roles in the make-up of the convenience inscriptions and their relevance to gender.

This study is significant because, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, it prides itself as the first of its kind to examine the pragmatic import of convenience inscriptions. Also, the study enriches the discourse and literature in gender studies, pragmatics and, by extension, the field of linguistics.

This study is limited by the lack of previous studies or research on convenience inscriptions. This dearth of materials affected the depth of the literature review, especially as regards convenience inscriptions.

The study suggests that further research be carried out on convenience inscriptions using other relevant linguistic theoretical frameworks and also expand on the import of convenience inscriptions on gender stereotyping in language.

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