

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### Background of Study

The struggle for women's rights began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the period of intense intellectual activity known as the Age of Enlightenment.

In traditional Africa the woman is an object of constant scorn, degradation and physical torture. In the past, women did not exist as individuals with personalities to defend. They rather existed as mere docile and exotic accompaniments to the males. Throughout that period, women lacked a voice to articulate their dilemma and their points of view. They, thus, accepted their fate without resistance. Such passive stance results from societal conditioning through questionable cultural practices. From birth, through childhood and adolescence, to adulthood, Africans receive from society and others around the messages and feedbacks which launch them into roles and behaviors considered appropriate for males and females respectively. Most often, females are accorded inferior roles and such long years of cultural suppression and intimidation, unfortunately, misled the women into an underestimation of their capabilities and self worth. Encased in such a cultural mystique, the African women were particularly driven by a community sense since culture obviates individualism. In those days, these women, in addition to experiencing the same oppressive social condition as their male counterparts in a developing world, were subjected to extra repressive burdens arising from the socio-cultural structures of patriarchy and gender hierarchy. These years of subjugation have, however, produced in today's women relentless questioning of the status quo. They protest against dehumanization, political enslavement and social oppression. They rationalize that the running of the Africa world is not the preserve for males and thus there should be absolute equality of both sexes in all spheres of life. Such a reaction is termed feminism, which is an ideology that urges, in simple terms, recognition of the claims of women for equal rights with men.

According to Cora Kaplan (162) Literary text are constructed from within ideology, and the reality they articulate is dependent on the historical culture which surrounds them; so too are the literary critical claims about their truthfulness or authenticity determined by the culture from which they arise. Helen Chukwuma (xiv) specifically contends that African feminism is dedicated and

informed from within, from social realities that obtain. One of such realities is the persistence of sexist socio-psychological paradigm despite the efforts to overcome “the androcentricism which informs social life”. (Uko, 33)

The persistent sexism in Africa is, however, matched with women’s continued aggressive demand for equal places in men’s former citadel of power and privilege. The chorus African women say to men “whatever the case maybe, you will never again hear us pronounce the words of the Virgin Mary, ‘thy will be done’ while smiling at your despotic power”. (Josephine Felicite in Moses, C.G. and Rabine, L. 308-309). They argue that it is better for men to desire from them those noble and generous feelings which must exist between equals than those mercenary feelings which a slave has for his master. Consequent upon this quest and argument, there is a recent definition of womanhood in the context of the African cosmic order: “A human being endowed with all the capabilities and talents required to effectively function and make impact on all levels of life within society” (Adeife Osemeikhiam, 21).

Notwithstanding the above stance, there still abounds in Africa, evidence of gender stereotypes which simply means a collection of commonly held beliefs or opinions about what are “appropriate” behaviors and activities for males and those that are “appropriate” for females. As a result of this, even though men support women’s condemnation of their (women) societal deprivations, men’s language still betrays subtle inclination to sexist socialization.

*The New Lexicon Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*, Sexism is exemplified firstly as attitudes and institutions, often unconscious that judge human worth on the grounds of gender or sex.

It is explained as prejudice or discrimination usually against women, based on their gender. Sexist socialization, therefore, refers to the process by which infants and children are brought up to imbibe attitudes and practices that discriminate against women on the grounds of their gender.

This work examines *So Long a Letter* with a view to highlight its characteristic language usage and as well as the psychological disposition that informs such use of language. Research findings by anthropologists, educationists and sociolinguistics show that traditionally, males use non-standard language; females use the language of rapport while males use the language of report; discursive language style is meant for women while men are given to the language of theories and abstractions; females use polite language meant to maintain harmony and strong

relationship as well as to keep conversations open whereas males use the language of assertiveness and insistence. Women use the language of solidarity but men use the language of the expert.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Men in Africa make women understand that they, the men, are the head of the family that is, they are superior to women. They see women as being weak and as a result, women have no say in the activities of the community. They have no rights and are subjugated to do whatever the men want them to do especially in Africa. Women are made to feel inferior and this breeds some sort of ill feelings in women.

### **Objective of the study**

**The aim of this is to identify how Mariama Ba uses language to portray feminism - the reaction of females against the oppressive and discriminatory culture experienced by them - in her novel *So Long a Letter*.**

### **Significance of the Study**

**The topic Language in Feminist Literature: a study of Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*, will serve as a good research material to students and other researchers.**

**This work will throw more light on the language of feminism and its impact to society.**

### **Scope of the Study**

This project is restricted primarily to the study of the Language in Feminist Literature in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*.

### **Research Question**

What is the impact of language of feminism on the society?

What are the ways language of feminism can be improved ?

### **Research Methodology**

The primary material of this work is Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* while the secondary materials include the various works from the library.

### **Limitation of the study**

The major limitation of the study is the time taken to study the novel.

### **Definition of terms**

**Feminism: the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of**

the equality of the sexes.

Language: the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

Society: the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community.

## **THE LANGUAGE OF FEMINISM AND ITS IMPACT TO THE SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF MARIAMA BA'S So Long a Letter**

The complete project material is available and ready for download. All what you need to do is to order for the complete material. The price for the material is NGN 3,000.00.

Make payment via bank transfer to Bank: Guaranteed Trust Bank, Account name: Emi-Aware technology, Account Number: 0424875728

Bank: Zenith Bank, Account name: Emi-Aware technology, Account Number: 1222004869

or visit the website and pay online. For more info: Visit <https://researchcub.info/payment-instruct.html>

After payment send your depositor's name, amount paid, project topic, email address or your phone number (in which instructions will sent to you to download the material) to +234 70 6329 8784 via text message/ whatsapp or Email address: [info@allprojectmaterials.com](mailto:info@allprojectmaterials.com).

Once payment is confirmed, the material will be sent to you immediately.

It takes 5min to 30min to confirm and send the material to you.

For more project topics and materials visit: <https://researchcub.info/> or For enquiries: [info@allprojectmaterials.com](mailto:info@allprojectmaterials.com) or call/whatsapp: +234 70 6329 8784

Regards!!!