

# Gendered Communication and Bias in Applied Linguistics: A Film-Based Analysis of *Irreplaceable* by Omoni Oboli

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Received 17-04-2025

Revised 18-04-2025

Accepted 26-05-2025

Published 28-05-2025



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## Abstract:

This paper explores the intersection between gendered communication styles and language bias in applied linguistics through a critical analysis of the Nigerian film *Irreplaceable* by Omoni Oboli. The film portrays complex gender relations and emotional dynamics within familial and romantic contexts, providing fertile ground for examining how linguistic practices reflect and reinforce gender stereotypes. Drawing on scenes from the film, this study investigates the speech patterns of male and female characters, focusing on conversational dominance, politeness strategies, emotional expression, and power negotiation. These findings are then contextualized within existing theories in applied linguistics, particularly those related to gendered discourse and language socialization.

The study employs a qualitative discourse-analytic method grounded in feminist linguistics and conversation analysis. Through selected excerpts, it illustrates how language use in the film mirrors broader societal norms and expectations regarding gender roles. The analysis demonstrates how women in the film often employ mitigating language, seek alignment, and display emotional labor, while male characters more frequently exhibit assertiveness and control of topic shifts. These patterns align with existing findings in gender and language studies but also expose unique cultural dimensions.

The paper concludes by emphasizing the pedagogical potential of film in highlighting linguistic gender bias and suggests integrating similar media-based discourse analysis into language teaching curricula. This approach encourages critical language awareness, helping learners recognize and challenge gendered assumptions embedded in everyday interactions.

**Keywords:** Gendered discourse, language bias, applied linguistics, feminist linguistics, Nigerian film, conversational analysis

## Introduction:

The study of language and gender within applied linguistics has long centered on the ways communication styles are mediated by sociocultural expectations, power hierarchies, and identity formation. Gendered communication, in particular, has garnered sustained scholarly

interest for its capacity to reflect and reproduce unequal power relations. Researchers in feminist linguistics and sociolinguistics have argued that language is not a neutral channel for expression but a site of ideological struggle where gender roles are performed, contested, and naturalized.

Within this framework, discourse becomes a powerful tool for analyzing how individuals navigate social structures, especially those rooted in patriarchal norms. Films, as cultural and communicative texts, offer a valuable corpus for analyzing these interactions. Their dialogic structure, multimodal nature, and narrative realism make them a rich resource for studying how language functions in social, emotional, and ideological contexts.

*Irreplaceable* (2024), a Nigerian family drama, offers a compelling lens through which to examine gendered discourse in an African, multilingual, and postcolonial context. Directed, produced, and co-written by the celebrated filmmaker Omoni Oboli, the film foregrounds interpersonal and intergenerational communication through the experiences of a young girl and her widowed mother. Sixteen-year-old Isio, emotionally mature beyond her years, embarks on a well-intentioned mission to find a new partner for her mother. This narrative premise sets off a chain of emotional entanglements, uncovering layers of gender dynamics, familial expectations, and linguistic negotiation. Through the interactions between Isio, her mother, her school rival Obiora, and the adults in their lives, the film portrays complex communicative acts laden with gendered expectations and emotional subtext.

Omoni Oboli is a prominent Nigerian actress, writer, producer, and director whose work frequently centers on issues of gender, social justice, and family life in contemporary Nigeria. A graduate of the New York Film Academy with additional training in French and digital filmmaking, Oboli has built a reputation for crafting stories that resonate with the lived experiences of African women. Her body of work consistently explores the emotional labour and social limitations imposed on women, using film as both a narrative and pedagogical platform. In *Irreplaceable*, Oboli draws on her commitment to feminist storytelling by scripting characters, particularly women who confront patriarchal norms not through overt rebellion, but through

linguistic agency and emotional resilience. The film's thematic concerns with grief, healing, and maternal agency are conveyed through carefully constructed dialogue, offering a layered site for discourse analysis.

The film's sociolinguistic richness lies in its use of Nigerian English, indigenous languages like Igbo, and code-switching as expressive tools. Characters shift between registers and languages to mark emotional states, assert authority, or challenge power. These linguistic strategies provide multifaceted insight into how gendered identities are performed and negotiated in everyday interactions. For instance, Iso's mother's use of rhetorical questioning "So, women should not be allowed to defend themselves but should just keep quiet so men can trample on them?" serves as a direct challenge to the gendered silencing of women. This stylistic choice, common in Nigerian speech culture, is not just a rhetorical device but a performative act of resistance that reclaims linguistic space.

Moreover, *Irreplaceable* dramatizes linguistic hierarchies through generational and gendered tensions. Male characters such as Obiora's father assert dominance through strategic interruptions, sarcasm, and switching to Igbo to reinforce emotional authority. In contrast, female characters, especially Isio and her mother employ emotional depth, repetition, and declarative structures that signify both care and control. These patterns are consistent with findings in applied linguistics that suggest women are more likely to use language collaboratively, while men tend to use it competitively (Tannen, 1990; Cameron, 1992).

Set in a contemporary Nigerian urban context, the film reflects the intersection of traditional norms and modern aspirations. It provides a model for analyzing how language is used to negotiate evolving gender roles in a rapidly changing society. The young characters' dialogue, often a fusion of local idioms and Western slang, exemplifies the sociolinguistic innovation typical of Nigerian youth, thereby highlighting generational shifts in identity construction.

This study positions *Irreplaceable* as both a reflective and critical text within applied linguistics. By examining the linguistic strategies deployed by characters to express, resist, or reinforce gendered norms, the film offers an illustrative case for understanding how communication mediates social identity. Omoni Oboli's film not only contributes to the cultural narrative of gender in Africa but also provides pedagogical potential for teaching language and gender awareness. The integration of media-based discourse analysis into applied linguistics scholarship deepens our understanding of how everyday language use both mirrors and shapes societal ideologies.

### **Scope of the Study:**

This study explores the film *Irreplaceable* by Omoni Oboli, specifically focusing on the conversations between the characters as they reveal gendered communication patterns, emotional expression, power dynamics, and identity. The analysis employs a feminist linguistics framework, using discourse analysis as the primary methodology. It investigates how language reflects and constructs gender roles and how these roles are negotiated in various contexts such as the family, professional settings, and social interactions.

The study is limited to analyzing the key conversational exchanges within the film, not extending to a detailed examination of non-verbal communication or other semiotic elements of the film. Additionally, while the focus is on gendered communication, the study acknowledges intersectionality, exploring how gender interacts with other social factors such as age, class, and familial roles. The study aims to identify how language use in the film aligns with or challenges traditional gender norms and to assess the potential of language to both perpetuate and resist gender inequalities.

The pedagogical implications of this study are significant, as it offers insights into how language can be used in educational settings to challenge gender stereotypes and promote more equitable

communication practices. This study contributes to the field of applied linguistics by demonstrating how language can be harnessed to address real-world social issues, particularly in terms of gender inequality and power imbalances.

### **Body Text:**

**Gendered Discourse** A gendered discourse continues to evolve across digital and media platforms, reflecting shifting societal attitudes. Gender discourse argue that even when overt stereotypes are avoided, underlying assumptions about gender roles persist in language; which explore gendered patterns in persuasive communication, showing how women are more likely to adopt cooperative discourse styles, while men are socialized into more competitive and assertive linguistic behaviours. These recent findings provide a critical lens for examining gendered interaction in media texts like *Irreplaceable*, where dialogue reveals embedded norms about emotional labor and relational dynamics.

**Language Bias** Language bias remains deeply entrenched in institutional and interpersonal discourse, subtly influencing perceptions of authority and credibility. They document how gendered assumptions shape hiring language, classroom participation, and even journalistic reporting. Investigating lexical bias in African digital news media and highlights the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of female voices. These studies are instrumental for understanding how *Irreplaceable* both mirrors and critiques the linguistic marginalization of women in Nigerian society.

**Applied Linguistics** Linguists propose a renewed approach to applied linguistics that integrates social justice and critical discourse analysis. They emphasize the need for linguistic research that addresses inequality and represents underexplored voices, especially in multilingual and multicultural contexts. In light of this, *Irreplaceable* serves as a text through which applied linguists can examine the interface between language, ideology, and representation.

The film's script provides real-life conversational cues that offer data for examining power dynamics and gender negotiation.

**Feminist Linguistics** Linguists advocates for feminist linguistic analysis that goes beyond counting features like tag questions or hedges to explore how speakers negotiate identity, resistance, and agency. Intersectionality encourages deeper engagement with cultural context. Additionally, exploring how Nigerian women navigate and resist linguistic patriarchy in everyday communication. These understanding reinforce how *Irreplaceable* foregrounds women's voices and challenges dominant narratives through language.

**Nigerian Film and Language** Emphasizes the role of Nollywood as a linguistic archive that reflects evolving norms and values in Nigerian society. Through content and discourse analysis, we identify how language in Nigerian cinema reveals shifting gender ideologies, especially in relation to urbanization and globalization. Similarly, we can examine how language in film reflects gendered socialization and power hierarchies. These studies are particularly relevant in contextualizing *Irreplaceable* as a critical artifact of gendered communication in contemporary Nigeria.

**Conversational Analysis** Provides updated tools for analyzing turn-taking, repair mechanisms, and sequence organization in everyday conversation. This research has been widely applied in media linguistics to uncover patterns of dominance, deference, and emotional alignment. In analyzing *Irreplaceable*, their framework helps decode the subtle cues that convey control, empathy, or withdrawal in character interactions. We apply conversation analysis to Nollywood films and argue that such texts are fertile sites for unpacking gendered communicative strategies in African cultural settings.

#### **Gaps in Literature:**

While extensive research exists on gender and language in Western settings, fewer studies examine these dynamics in African film discourse.

The intersection of media, gender, and applied linguistics is yet to be fully investigated, particularly using film as both a data source and pedagogical tool. This study addresses this gap by merging cinematic analysis with applied linguistic inquiry.

#### **Theoretical Framework:**

The analysis draws on feminist linguistics and conversational analysis. Feminist linguistics critiques how traditional language structures reflect patriarchal ideologies, while conversation analysis provides tools to examine turn-taking, interruptions, topic control, and politeness markers within dialogue.

#### **Methodology:**

This qualitative study uses discourse analysis to examine selected scenes from *Irreplaceable*. Dialogues are transcribed and analyzed for gendered speech features: interruptions, tag questions, hedging, politeness strategies, and emotional expressivity. The scenes are selected based on their intensity of interpersonal interaction, particularly conflict and resolution sequences.

#### **Result and Discussion:**

##### **Conversational Dominance and Interruption:**

In a defining scene where Isio's mother confronts Obiora's uncle about her daughter's treatment, we witness a clear example of conversational dominance a phenomenon often analyzed in feminist linguistics. The uncle interrupts and speaks over her multiple times, refusing to acknowledge her claims. For instance:

**Isio's Mother:** "Your son harassed my daughter."

**Obiora's Uncle (interrupting):** "Harassed? Your daughter spilled water on my son... From your behaviour here, it's easy to see where she got it."

This interaction demonstrates how interruption functions as a tool of silencing and control. The uncle's dismissal, particularly the metaphorical phrase "the apple does not fall far from the tree" undermines the mother's voice and shifts blame onto her. From a discourse-analytic lens, this

aligns with findings that men often use interruptions to reassert conversational control, particularly when confronted by women. Theoretical contributions from Lakoff (1975) and Tannen (1990) on gendered discourse styles suggest that this interruption is both a reinforcement of patriarchal power and a means of maintaining social hierarchy through linguistic dominance.

### **Rhetorical Questioning and Feminist Resistance:**

A striking moment of gendered resistance occurs when Isio's mother challenges societal expectations:

**Isio's Mother:** "So, women should not be allowed to defend themselves but should just keep quiet so men can trample on them?" **Obiora's Uncle:** "This is not a feminism show."

The mother's rhetorical question challenges the expectation of female passivity, employing a common strategy in Nigerian discourse to express indignation and resistance. The uncle's curt reply, labeling her stance as "a feminism show," trivializes her assertion and reflects a defensive reaction typical of patriarchal discourse when confronted with feminist ideology. From the lens of feminist pragmatics (Mills, 2003), this exchange highlights how rhetorical forms can encode resistance while simultaneously revealing deep-seated gender ideologies. The use of rhetorical questioning here allows the female speaker to occupy a space of moral and linguistic authority an uncommon privilege in patriarchal interactions thus disrupting the male-centered communicative norm.

### **Code-Switching and Emotional Authority:**

In conversations between Obiora and his father, we observe strategic code-switching between English and Igbo:

**Obiora's Father:** "Bia, where are you coming from?" **Obiora:** "I stayed at a friend's house to finish my assignments, sir." **Obiora's Father:** "Okwaya, okay."

The father's use of Igbo terms like *bia* ("come here") and *okwaya* (a confirming question) adds emotional gravity and cultural authority. According to Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, code-switching here is a "marked" choice that signals affective closeness and sociocultural positioning. While English enforces hierarchical distance (as in formal schooling or discipline), Igbo draws on intimate and traditional authority. This layered use of language conveys the father's attempt to blend patriarchal control with emotional appeal, asserting both discipline and cultural legitimacy. From a discourse-analytic perspective, the use of native language in emotionally heightened moments reveals the integration of linguistic choices in identity construction and intergenerational negotiation.

### **Repetition as Emotional Emphasis:**

Emotional states are often underscored in the film through repetition, a pattern consistent with Nigerian discourse norms and widely studied in sociolinguistics. One key example is:

**Isio:** "Never, never going to happen." **Isio's Mother:** "Be good, be good."

In both cases, repetition functions to heighten emotional intensity and commitment. Isio's phrase marks resistance and finality, aligning with her assertion of agency. Her mother's, by contrast, softens instruction into affection, blending authority with emotional support. As Tannen (1990) notes, repetition is not just a linguistic redundancy but a discourse strategy that builds rhythm, emphasis, and rapport. In feminist linguistics, this pattern is often attributed to women's "rapport style" of communication, which contrasts with the male "report style." Thus, repetition here is a gendered resource, expressing emotional alignment and moral conviction within family structures.

### **Sarcasm and Verbal Aggression:**

In another emotionally charged confrontation, Obiora's uncle responds to Isio's mother with sarcasm and insinuation:

**Obiora's Uncle:** "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

This sarcastic metaphor is a form of verbal aggression, often used to undermine participants without direct confrontation. In the context of gendered communication, sarcasm functions here as a passive-aggressive assertion of dominance. Cameron (1998) notes that sarcasm can encode hostility while maintaining plausible deniability, a strategy more often employed by men in power. This comment attacks not only Isio's mother but also her daughter's character, thereby extending its insult across generations. From a methodological standpoint, the qualitative discourse analysis exposes how metaphor and sarcasm sustain hierarchical structures and emotional injury within everyday interactions.

### **Institutional Language and Conflict Mediation**

When tensions escalate, the principal intervenes with a single, firm phrase:

**Principal:** "Calm down."

While brief, this interjection is linguistically powerful. It reflects the use of institutional discourse to restore order, aligning with the findings of Fairclough (1989) on language and power. The command is deliberately impersonal and controlling, signaling authority without emotional engagement. In the Nigerian sociolinguistic context, such expressions are common in hierarchical settings, including schools and workplaces. Though neutral on the surface, "calm down" carries implications of delegitimizing emotional expression, especially from women. It performs the dual function of silencing conflict while upholding institutional norms, and it often benefits those already in positions of power.

### **Youth Language and Generational Identity:**

The dialogue between Isio and Obiora often reflects generational shifts in communication style:

**Obiora:** "Listen, miss, grown-ups are complicated." **Isio:** "No, they're not. We are the complicated ones."

This ironic and introspective exchange exemplifies the youth's playful and self-aware discourse, characterized by informal syntax, humour, and emotional self-reflection. Drawing from sociolinguistic studies on youth speech, this reflects a linguistic identity that values honesty, vulnerability, and autonomy. Their language is fluid and peppered with Western slang and cultural references, signaling the influence of global media. As Bucholtz & Hall (2005) argue, youth language is a site of identity formation, and in *Irreplaceable*, it showcases resistance to rigid adult norms and embraces a more emotionally articulate, non-hierarchical style of communication.

### **Rhetorical Resistance and Patriarchal Dismissal:**

**Scene:** Isio's Mother: "So, women should not be allowed to defend themselves but should just keep quiet so men can trample on them?"

Obiora's Uncle: "This is not a feminism show."

This exchange illustrates the clash between feminist assertion and patriarchal dismissal. Isio's mother uses rhetorical questioning as a resistance strategy, a form common in feminist discourse for reclaiming discursive space. Her phrasing draws attention to the expectation of female silence and highlights the absurdity of this norm. By contrast, Obiora's uncle trivializes her stance, labeling it dismissively as "a feminism show." From a discourse-analytic lens, his use of the word "show" implies exaggeration and undermines her emotional labour. This tension reflects gendered imbalances in conversational legitimacy, where women's critical discourse is often minimized or framed as emotional excess.

### **Emotional Expression and Cultural Identity via Code-Switching:**

**Scene:** Obiora's Father: "Bia, where are you coming from?"

Obiora: "I had assignments to do, so I stayed back at a friend's house to finish, yes sir."

Obiora's Father: "Okwaya, okay."

The strategic use of code-switching between English and Igbo in this conversation reveals emotional intensity and power dynamics. "Bia" and "Okwaya" are emotionally loaded Igbo expressions, marking both authority and cultural proximity. In feminist linguistics, emotional expressiveness is not exclusive to women but contextually bound to power. Here, the father wields both language and emotion to assert authority, while Obiora's blend of justification and politeness reflects a subordinated but emotionally aware stance. This illustrates how multilingual interactions encode hierarchical relationships, with Igbo serving to reinforce traditional roles and English functioning as a tool of modernity and reason.

### **Maternal Affection and Softened Authority through Repetition:**

**Scene:** Isio's Mother: *"Be good, be good."*

Repetition in this brief utterance functions both as affection and subtle discipline. In Nigerian English, repetition often serves to emphasize sincerity and emotional undertone. Feminist linguistic analysis sees such maternal utterances as gendered performances of care, where women are tasked with emotional labour even in everyday speech. The mother's repeated phrase transforms a directive into a gesture of love and reassurance. It suggests a nurturing authority that balances emotional closeness with behavioural expectation, reflecting traditional maternal roles shaped by both cultural and linguistic norms.

### **Grief and Conversational Boundary Setting:**

**Scene:** Obiora: *"Five years is enough time to have mourned your father. You should stop."*  
Isio: *"You can never tell someone how long to mourn."*

This emotionally charged exchange foregrounds conflicting understandings of grief and emotional entitlement. Obiora's comment reflects a masculine tendency toward closure and rationality, aligned with the discourse norm of emotional restraint. Isio, in contrast, resists this emotional boundary-setting by asserting her

subjective right to mourn. From a feminist linguistic perspective, this conversation underscores how women's emotional expression is often policed, even in intimate interactions. Isio's calm but firm language reflects emotional intelligence and asserts the legitimacy of affect as personal truth, challenging the implicit silencing embedded in her peer's response.

### **Defensiveness, Insult, and Gendered Moral Superiority:**

**Scene:** Isio's Mother: *"Your son harassed my daughter."*

Obiora's Uncle: *"Harassed? Your daughter spilled water on my son. The apple does not fall far from the tree."*

This exchange reveals a common patriarchal strategy of deflection and counter-blame. The uncle weaponizes metaphor ("the apple does not fall far from the tree") to attack maternal credibility, thus shifting the conversation from justice to character assassination. From a discourse-analytic viewpoint, this is a gendered attempt to reframe the conversation as a moral trial of the mother, not a defense of the child. Feminist theory would highlight the gendered imbalance here, male characters using institutional language and figurative speech to silence women and reclaim discursive control.

### **Language as a Tool for Parental Authority and Assertiveness:**

**Scene:** Obiora's Father: *"Bia, where are you coming from?"*

Obiora: *"I had assignments to do, so I stayed back at a friend's house to finish, yes sir."*  
Obiora's Father: *"Okwaya, okay."*

In this exchange, Obiora's father uses direct commands and questions ("Bia"), indicative of patriarchal authority and a desire to assert control over his son. The father's language is not just about acquiring information, but also about reaffirming his role as the disciplinarian. The switch from Igbo to English suggests an attempt to balance traditional and modern authority, Igbo

to assert paternal closeness and authority, English to invoke rationality and modernity. From a feminist linguistics perspective, this marks a gendered power dynamic, as the father's language is a way to maintain control and create distance from Obiora, who is expected to respond with deference. The father's calm affirmation ("Okwaya, okay") signals a conditional approval that reinforces his dominant position in the relationship.

### **Gendered Silence and the Institutional Role in Mediating Conflict:**

**Scene:** Isio's Mother: *"Your son harassed my daughter."*

Obiora's Uncle: *"Harassed? Your daughter spilled water on my son. The apple does not fall far from the tree."*

Principal: *"Calm down."*

In this scene, we see a clash of gendered discourses: Isio's mother accuses Obiora's son of harassment, but Obiora's uncle flips the situation, using a metaphor to deflect the accusation and reframe the interaction as a critique of Isio's maternal qualities. The principal's interjection, "calm down," reflects an institutionalized response to maintain order, often delivered in a gender-neutral tone, yet it underscores a strategy that more often serves to quiet women's voices in the public sphere. The principal's attempt to neutralize the tension through a directive (a form of authoritative discourse) inadvertently suppresses the initial confrontation and reinforces social expectations of composure, particularly from women. Feminist analysis would consider how institutional authority serves to de-escalate conflict by dismissing emotional expressions, typically by women, that might challenge the status quo.

### **Politeness Strategies and Gendered Power Relations:**

**Scene:** Isio: *"Listen, miss, grown-ups are complicated."* Obiora: *"No, they're not. We are the complicated ones."*

In this exchange, the distinction between "grown-ups" and "we" reflects generational and gendered divides in communication. Isio uses a formal "listen, miss," implying respect while simultaneously asserting her perspective on the complexity of adults. This suggests an awareness of hierarchical structures, as Isio is attempting to navigate the power imbalance between herself and Obiora. However, Obiora counters with a simplification of the situation, using the second-person pronoun "we" to include himself in the discourse and challenge Isio's more mature perspective. Feminist linguistics often notes how politeness strategies like addressing someone as "miss" can both convey deference and reinforce gendered hierarchies. In this case, Isio's respectful address is still tied to her status as a young woman; while Obiora's more casual and inclusive tone suggests a rejection of these hierarchical cues.

### **Challenging Gendered Expectations through Directness:**

**Scene:** Isio's Mother: *"So, women should not be allowed to defend themselves but should just keep quiet so men can trample on them?"* Obiora's Uncle: *"This is not a feminism show."*

Isio's mother challenges the traditional gendered expectation that women should remain passive in the face of male aggression. The directness of her question, which points to the underlying oppression women face, reflects a challenge to patriarchal norms. This is an example of how feminist discourse can subvert traditional gender roles by exposing the silencing and marginalization of women. Her language is assertive, using the question as a weapon to disrupt the conversation and force her male counterpart to reconsider his position. However, Obiora's uncle dismisses her viewpoint with the phrase "This is not a feminism show," which is a clear attempt to trivialize her argument. From a discourse-analytic perspective, the uncle's comment serves to shut down the dialogue, reinforcing the silencing of women's voices when they challenge established power structures.

### **Family Dynamics and Language of Resistance:**

**Scene:** Obiora's Uncle: "You call him your son? Have you spent a dime on his school fees? Have you put food on his table?"

Obiora's uncle questions the legitimacy of Obiora's biological father's claim over him, using rhetorical questions to challenge the father's emotional and moral authority. The uncle's language, though confrontational, is rooted in his lived experience of providing for Obiora. His use of questions to challenge the father's legitimacy is a method of asserting his own role as a parental figure. Feminist linguistic theory would view this as a critique of traditional patriarchal notions of fatherhood, which often equate biological ties with authority. The uncle's rhetorical strategy, grounded in practical action ("Have you spent a dime?"), draws on the feminist notion that actions, not just words, define authority and legitimacy in family structures.

### **The Subtext of Gendered Emotional Labour:**

**Scene:** Isio: "Never, never going to happen." Isio's emphatic repetition of "never" represents a form of linguistic resistance, reinforcing her determination not to comply with a demand that she perceives as unfair or emotionally burdensome. The repetition serves to emphasize the gravity of her refusal, signaling autonomy and emotional intelligence. Feminist linguistics often highlights how women's emotional labor is embedded in their language, and here, Isio uses repetition to take control of the conversation, signaling her refusal to be emotionally manipulated or coerced. This is a subtle form of resistance against the pressure to conform to gendered expectations, illustrating how language can empower women to assert their emotional boundaries.

### **Intertextual Connections: Language, Gender, and Real-World Problems in Other Literary Works:**

The linguistic and feminist issues explored in *Irreplaceable* are not isolated phenomena but resonate deeply with themes in other African and

global literary texts. These texts similarly demonstrate how language functions as a site of resistance, identity formation, and social transformation, core concerns in applied linguistics. Below are several key literary parallels:

### **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *We Should All Be Feminists*:**

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* portrays a young girl, Kambili, growing up under the oppressive authority of her patriarchal father. Through internal monologue and constrained dialogue, Adichie illustrates how silence and speech are gendered experiences. Like in *Irreplaceable*, the female characters gradually reclaim their voices in response to gendered oppression. Adichie's essay *We Should All Be Feminists* further amplifies this by using accessible, persuasive language to advocate for equality, showing that the choice of words and tone can dismantle long-standing social prejudices.

### **Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*:**

Emecheta's novel explores the life of Nnu Ego, a woman caught between traditional expectations and the realities of modernity. Her conversations are steeped in gendered expectations of motherhood, sacrifice, and silence. Like the women in *Irreplaceable*, Nnu Ego is constrained by patriarchal norms but uses narrative and inner speech to question her role.

### **Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*:**

In this Ghanaian novel, the protagonist Esi chooses a modern, independent lifestyle, challenging the patriarchal expectations of marriage and female submission. Her conversations with other women (and men) critically examine the contradictions between tradition and modern gender roles, mirroring many of the conversational issues in *Irreplaceable*.

### **Nnedi Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix*:**

In this speculative fiction work, Okorafor explores themes of power, resistance, and control through a

futuristic lens. Language here is both literal (used in resistance and rebellion) and metaphorical, with storytelling becoming a revolutionary act. Female identity, autonomy, and rebellion are communicated through deliberate linguistic choices, much like in *Irreplaceable*.

### **Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter*:**

This epistolary novel highlights the inner thoughts and spoken exchanges between two Senegalese women as they reflect on patriarchy, polygamy, and societal expectations. The letter form allows for an intimate, personal reflection on societal constraints, similar to the emotionally charged dialogues in *Irreplaceable*.

### **Connecting to Applied Linguistics and Pedagogy:**

All of these literary works like *Irreplaceable* illustrate how language can:

1. Reflect entrenched gender ideologies.
2. Serve as a tool of resistance and empowerment.
3. Influence identity formation and power structures.
4. Be consciously used in educational settings to raise awareness of real-world gender issues.

From an applied linguistics perspective, these texts provide **case studies** in real-world language use, how it functions in contexts of inequality, resistance, and empowerment. They reinforce the pedagogical value of analyzing film and literature in language classes, helping learners not only to become aware of linguistic structures but to understand how those structures relate to power, identity, and social justice.

### **Conclusion:**

This study, *Gendered Communication in Omoni Oboli's Film Irreplaceable: An Applied Linguistic and Feminist Discourse Analysis*, has examined how language operates as a medium through which gender roles, identities, and inequalities are both constructed and contested in contemporary

Nigerian society. From the abstract through the analysis, the research emphasized that filmic discourse is not merely a cultural product but a potent linguistic tool that reflects, reinforces, or resists social norms. Through the theoretical frameworks of feminist linguistics, particularly Lakoff's dominance model and Tannen's difference approach, paired with a qualitative discourse analytic methodology, the study interrogated the nuanced ways in which gendered communication manifests in dialogic interactions in *Irreplaceable*.

The feminist discourse analysis revealed several conversational issues including verbal dominance, emotional labour, epistemic authority, politeness strategies, identity silencing, and intergenerational communication conflicts. Each issue was addressed in depth, showing how linguistic choices reinforce gender hierarchies but also reveal potential for resistance and transformation. Male characters, for example, were shown to assert authority through interruptions and directness, while female characters often employed mitigation and emotional expressiveness, navigating patriarchal limitations with strategic agency.

Importantly, the study linked these findings to other African literary works such as Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Aidoo's *Changes*, Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, and Bâ's *So Long a Letter*, all of which portray how language can simultaneously reflect and contest gendered oppression. In doing so, the study situates itself within applied linguistics by demonstrating how analyzing language in literature and media can provide insights into real-world sociolinguistic problems.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this research illustrates how applied linguistics can be harnessed to foster critical awareness in students and society at large. Films like *Irreplaceable* become valuable teaching tools for raising awareness about gender bias, promoting inclusive discourse, and instilling language consciousness. The study highlights the practical value of

linguistic knowledge in addressing social injustice, thus aligning perfectly with the core objective of applied linguistics, to use language analysis in solving real-world problems.

### Recommendations:

1. Curriculum Integration: Incorporate films like *Irreplaceable* into applied linguistics and communication studies outline to foster critical thinking on gender and language.
2. Gender-Aware Pedagogy: Teachers should adopt feminist discourse analysis as a framework for teaching sociolinguistics, focusing on how language perpetuates or resists systemic inequality.
3. Professional Development: Training in gender-sensitive communication should be extended to professionals in education, counseling, law, and media to reduce linguistic bias and foster equity.
4. Community-Based Campaigns: Use findings from film and literary discourse analyses to design public education campaigns that highlight how language affects social justice and inclusion.
5. Media and Creative Industry Engagement: Encourage media creators to craft narratives that challenge linguistic norms reinforcing gender stereotypes, promoting egalitarian and empowering language practices.
6. Further Research: Conduct broader studies involving other African films and indigenous language content to understand localized patterns of gendered communication and develop culturally responsive solutions.

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