

ABSTRACT

A Critical Analysis of Valencian public discourses from a gender perspective

In the present thesis three highly relevant public spheres within the autonomous community of Valencia are the focus of this critical research on discrimination in public discourses: the public administration, education and the media. More specifically we examine texts produced by the Justice Department of Valencia, school textbooks from both primary and secondary schools and the news programmes from Canal 9, the regional television station which was closed down in 2013. In spite of the fact that the Valencian region of Spain, had passed an Equality Law in 2003, four years before the Spanish state law was passed in 2007, the results from this study would indicate that these discourses lack an inclusive perspective and a rigorous use of non-discriminatory language.

Therefore, the objective that we pursue in this thesis is to demonstrate how these discriminatory stereotypes are reproduced in these three contexts, and in turn, raise public awareness among citizens and their political representatives so that this situation of language discrimination may be rectified. We also suggest a number of educational proposals which could help to bring this about, because we understand that equality begins in schools where, among other things, students are also taught to think freely and autonomously.

With regard to the eminently critical nature of our work and the existing overlap between language and its social use, the methodological tool used in our study is critical discourse analysis and also Van Leeuwen's (1996) analysis of social roles; thus, through this methodology we not only criticize, but also make proposals, from a positive philosophy perspective, and propose alternatives to help us neutralize this inequality. One of these is what is called action research, which is put into practice through the publication of critical articles in the press, and in this way we strive to carry out a type of pedagogy that we consider necessary to reflect on this issue.

The results of the study show that, in the Administration of Justice, despite being mostly made up of women, there is a manifestly exclusively-male dominated type of language to be observed under the pretext of the effectiveness of the male generic form. There is also discrimination to be found in the school textbooks where, for example, history textbooks can be seen to tell only one part of the story of humankind, mainly from a male perspective while women, remain invisible, or at least underrepresented. The news items studied from the now defunct Channel-9 RTVV reveal the underrepresentation of women as news subjects in a very high percentage, and on occasions, not appearing a single female during the whole of the news programme.

Thus, the constant contradiction between what the law proposes and what takes place in reality, the policies with regard to the visibility of women concerning the school curricula for compulsory education, accompanied by the strong influence of ecclesiastical powers, which constantly appears to expel women from the modern world, are factors that override the rights of women, perpetuating on a daily basis, in everyday situations, inequality in subjugation to patriarchal power.

Finally, we develop some linguistic and educational proposals for action with a view to changing the status quo as only positive and active pedagogies can change these attitudes in society.