

Algerian Gendered Car Nicknaming

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Abstract

Human identity is still seen nowadays as masculine or feminine by many scholars like Ballantine and Roberts (2010) who consider gender the manner identity is built to meet societal expectations. While masculinity indicates man's traits in relation to specific performances as in the field of cars, femininity involves women's attributes. The subject of language variation in association with gender has drawn the post-structuralists' particular attention to feed later their language investigation via gender theories as one inspiration source. The dominance theory (Spender, 1985) illustratively tackles power inequality in gender and its effects on speech. According to this theory, women are linguistically attributed a lower position as a result of man empowering. Empowerment implies human insertion in decision management processes from numerous standpoints in reaction to several injustice occurrences striking for instance gender. In the case of cars, men opt for nicknaming their automobiles using feminine terms. This connection between car nicknaming and femininity reinforces some dominance theory's beliefs in Algeria. The difference theorists, on the other hand, claim that men and women do not talk in the same way rather because of their identities which are culturally distinctly built (Tannen, 1991): They see the two genders as affiliating to two dissimilar subcultures. Car nicknaming exemplifies a number of their basic criteria. This paper seeks to examine and describe the phenomenon of car nicknaming in Algeria as well as explains the causes underlying its occurrences. It also attempts to shed light on such gendered lexical variation under the power/ culture impact.

Ballantine, J. H. & Roberts, K. (2010). *Our Social World: Introduction to Sociology*, (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/Pine Forge Press

Spender, D. (1985). *Man Made Language*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

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Introduction

As the study of language variation¹ has revealed an increasing demand for a multidisciplinary frame, the feministic² rise of gender studies, launched and popularised by Robin Lakoff's publication *Language and Women's Place* during the seventies, was at the

¹ or variability

² Feminism is "... a movement concerned with identifying and seeking to combat the social, cultural, political and economic oppression of women and girls... to produce gender equality" (Swann et al, 2004: 108)

great advantage of sociolinguistic works (see 2) on genderlect³. Language variationists could subsequently expand their vision of the relationship between language and gender by obtaining their inspiration from the feministic movement and theories. Since technology is worldwide overwhelming in parallel, sociolinguistic scholarship has gained new accesses to nourish its investigations and find answers to its enquiries from technology studies together with gender studies.

1. Gender Theories

Sex and gender are two different related notions. The biological categorisation based on reproductive potential is sex while gender is expected to depict socially this classification (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003): “Our society, through family, educational institutions, religious institutions and many other social organisations and conventions, attaches to us certain expectations,...” (Wachs, 1996: 100). Some social norms are inculcated in individuals through the process of socialisation. A number of theories of gender have arisen to particularly tackle women’s socialisation in addition to their acquisition of certain language traits and uses. They also seek to uncover some possible explanations lying behind the differences between feminine and masculine language choices. This study puts particular emphasis on the theories of dominance and difference.

1.1. The Dominance Theory

Both paradigms, deficit and dominance, accentuate the pervasiveness of inequality between masculinity and femininity. The former approach has headed up the traditional claim that men’s speech is normative while the speech of women is a deviation from this norm: women’s ways of talking are featured by deficiency, powerlessness and inferiority as an outcome of societal gendered injustice. However, the influential essay of *Language and Women’s Place* has been revised by many later scholars who reproach the author Lakoff’s (1975) arguments, as well as broaden and refine the area of language and gender. Based on evidence and empirical methods in actual situation, the dominance theorists have rather come up to attack the intuitive and introspective attributes of the deficit model. Those who subscribe to this approach assume that the deficit theory is subjected to bias under the impact of stereotyping convictions and beliefs. Differences between men and women, for them, are primordially power differences, as suggested by the second name of the current theory power-based theory.

³ male or female speech

In this theory, the path of feminine gender's negative assessment is pursued; women are disempowered speech community members affiliated to a submissive group whose speech is victimised by societies' patriarchy and masculine dominant speech and roles within interactions. The theorists Dale Don Zimmerman and Candace West (1975) ride among others this feminist mainstream and have experimentally worked on interruption and silencing tools in mixed- sexed conversations: Men manifest more interrupting tendencies to achieve control and authority over women in conversations. This study has arisen to strengthen men's social supremacy, domination and superiority in opposition respectively to women's subservience, subordination, and inferiority.

1.2. The Difference Theory

The dominance theory has been subject to criticisms as it suffers restrictions identified according to different viewpoints. It has been particularly blamed for denying the sizeable degree of power women have reached over time. Differences between genders and their association with language have gone through later reconsideration and revision. In her book *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*, Tannen (1991) has developed what is known as the difference (or culture) theory which originally adheres to Gumperz⁴'s researches on cross-cultural communication. According to this theory's view, men and women, even though they may live within one milieu, do not have the same society perception because they belong to distinct sub-cultures whereby they socialise and develop different ways of using language communication.

Scholars assigned to this approach contrast the use of language by the two genders: Men are competitive characters who seek for negotiating their status through speech. This is usually not the case of women looking rather for support via a network of world connections. If a problem emerges, men rush for confrontation and solutions while understanding and sympathy for this situation difficulty are searched by women. The latter gender favours positive rapport maintenance. Tannen (1991) talks also about information as the purpose of men's probably imperative communication in contrast with women whose often polite interaction aims at establishing and endorsing social relationships. Whereas the man, Tannen pursues, behaves as an independent individual in a hierarchical social order, the feminine gender opts for intimacy in relationships.

⁴ See Tannen (1991)

Social constructivist or performative researchers who refer to gender constructs as "doing/ performing gender" (speaking, driving, acting, car possessing) (e.g. Butler (1991)) have reacted against the postulations of the difference paradigm claiming that this model highlights static differences at the expense of imperative similarities between men and women, additionally to their ignoring the social status, age, race and power of the two genders.

2. Technology

Many species commonly come out with constructions in response to their instinctive demeanor: Birds construct nests to lay their eggs; moles dig holes where they survive; caterpillars metamorphose themselves into a pupa to become butterflies. Although the mankind lacks such an instinctive conduct, it is uniquely human to have the potential of new ideas, processes and methods to fashion artifacts out of ordinary and natural objects, under the heading of technology. If the snake instinctively uses its venom to poison other creatures for instance, technology renders yet this venom a medical treatment that saves countless human lives! A different example is the home where one uses objects with different shapes technologically designed to fit the diverse requirements of the kitchen (e.g. fridge, spoon, napkin, pan); bedroom (e.g. sheet, desk, mirror, laptop, air conditioner); bathroom (tube, toothpaste, washing machine). The same manual, electric or electronic item is esthetically or artlessly fabricated.

History, on the other hand, witnesses the presence of a tight connection between technology and socio-cultural conditions. The industrial revolution (1760-1840) is seen as the era of crucial technological innovations; speedy changes and evolutions in technology took place in Britain, spread to Europe, and then progressively reached other parts of the world. Buchaman (2016) identifies three factors in tight correlation with technology. First, the social need for new tools incites technological creation: It could be that new tools are required for faster cooking in the kitchen or a different material is necessitated to facilitate school class teaching; else, it could be medicine which is in increasing demand for sophisticated materials helping diagnose serious diseases. In case such particular necessities reach the societal level in the sense that a good number of people become aware of their needs, technological innovations obtain. The second factor has to do with social resource which in turn combines three elements: fund, means and potential staff.

The fund or capital is the financial resource for supporting the step-by-step innovation process. The means are usually materialistic and can call upon various matters (such as fabric, plastics, metal) that go well with the requirements of the new technological innovation. The other social resource (talented staff) refers to individuals qualified enough, with the capacity of innovating the required device. The third factor still correlating with technology is a sympathetic social ethos whereby the community members develop favourable attitudes to the new artifact. This factor encourages the innovator and is considered a stimulus to technological advances.

2.1. Gendered Technology

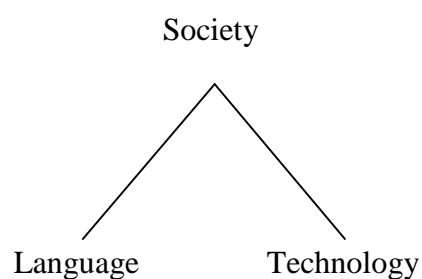
A set of concepts require definition beforehand in this section. Sociolinguistics is the scientific study of the interrelationship between language and society. Swann et al (2004: 162) quote Sapir's (1921) view of language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols." Society refers to a group of individuals who live together under their consensus of sharing certain norms and beliefs. A mutual influence is at the origin of connection between language and society. Without language, society members are not able to establish relationships among themselves nor can they identify the ways they should behave with one another. The absence of language leads to misunderstanding and probably conflict; and likewise, the disappearance of a given society makes its language vacuumed of social order and therefore useless. The destiny of language and society, in brief, is one.

Interestingly, the interrelationship with society is not restricted to language, but involves technology, too, and is explored notably within the field of social technology studies. Technology explicitly refers to materialistic items which implicitly conceal cultures and beliefs, following a number of scholars like Faulkner (2001), Lohan and Faulkner (2004) and Belkmar (2012). If language in co-relation with society means that it manifests according to certain social factors like age, social class, gender, social network and ethnicity, it happens that technology tends to fulfill and share this language role. Technology impacts society and the latter in turn frames the former, as a consequence of globalisation which has in many ways objectified humans and humanised objects.

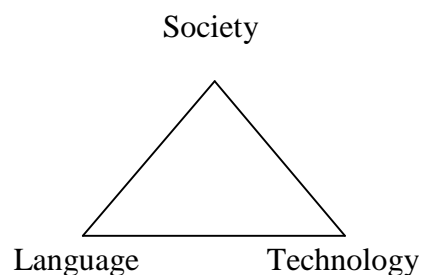
Humans can be objectified for the purpose of marketing; clothes seem more attractive once worn by human models and the need for purchasing technology is stimulated by watching advertisement human players for instance using advanced gadgets (e.g. mobiles,

cars, household devices). Humanising objects might be illustrated through the association between technology use/design and gender following Faulkner (2004: 319). The writer finds that technology "... is an extremely significant site of gender negotiations in relation to occupations, symbols, and identities, and gender in all these areas has an extremely significant shaping influence on the design and use of technologies". The car is a technological means which is not gender-free. It has gone through humanising modifications in use, design and other ways as will be shown shortly (see 5).

The interrelationship that matches society with language on the one hand and society with technology on the other can be represented as follows,



This interrelationship has been remarkably raised by the literature which has not nevertheless given enough attention to the interrelationship between language and technology as a third component of the following triangle,



The double interrelationship language-society/ technology-society becomes triple once considered within the frame of intersection between sociolinguistics and technology studies. We may even adventure to refer to this multidisciplinary meeting point as sociolinguistic technology studies. The concepts language, society and technology share characteristics in common; none is neutral nor static but all are dynamic, variable and in constant change. We may visualise ordinary physical entities which get transformed into technological tools full of social meaningful messages, emotions, and signs and also symbolically powerful in shaping lives and selfhood. We presently believe that nicknaming is a language device that can decode social implications provided by technology like cars (Redshaw, 2008). In this field, Algeria,

the present contextual country, relies generally on the policy of importing cars from Germany (e.g. BMW, Volkswagen, Mercedes), Japan (e.g. Toyota), Korea (e.g. Hyundai), India (e.g. Suzuki) and most importantly from France (e.g. Peugeot, Renault, Citroen). The French car type Renault enjoys the highest rank⁵.

2.2. *Masculinity and Technology*

Gender and sex embrace counterparts. Masculinity and femininity relate to gender activities whereas the biological classification into male and female indicate sex. The interrelationship between technology and society implies the symbolic tightly anchored link between technological advancement and masculinity. Symbolicity arises out of accumulation of cultural imaginings which universally develop in societies worldwide. Masculinity is seen as instinctively seeking for nature control, and technology is but the symbol of culturally masculine power and domination or an extension of this control and thus male-defined (Faulkner, 2001). The connection between technology and masculinity is hence profoundly rooted because the common features of control, domination and power converge to constitute hegemony. In sum, technology is viewed as men's cultural hegemony. On the other hand, the masculine emotional attachment to artifacts is increasingly recognised by the literature. Handling technology, according to Belkmar (2012), is a source of pleasure for men, ecstasy and excitement, and has stereotypically resulted in many ways in the equation between masculinity and technical skill.

Diachronically for example, literature has often referred to men in the position of metal workers when talking about the feudal era and as machine tool makers during the industrial epoch (see Lohan and Faulkner, 2004). Likewise, synchronically "...Mellström shows how important technology can be to such men's identities and subjectivities; he reveals an affinity to, and passionate pleasure in, machines... Similarly, Tine Kleif's study of technology hobbyists (...) revealed both intimacy with technology and intimacy with other men around technology" (ibid: 324). This interconnection between technology and masculinity, yet, is not without consequences on femininity. "...forms of pleasure largely exclude women and are thus interpreted as part of patriarchal power around technologies" (ibid). Belkmar (2012) additionally reports that technology is that skilled, heavy, dangerous, dirty, interesting and mobile machinery field in requirement of "hard" masculinity being in contrast with "soft" masculinity which is reserved to unskilled, light, less dangerous, clean,

⁵ Le Matin d'Algérie Le journal des débats et des idées

boring and non-machinery spheres. In sum, the culturally attributed masculine trait to technology has thus somehow dismissed femininity from the technical know-how.

It should be added that the interrelationship between masculinity and technology is still remarkably under-investigated, despite the rise of both technology studies and men/masculinity studies. Faulkner (2001) calls for serious framing of the phenomenon to better elucidate our vision and broaden our understanding about gender identities and power negotiations. The car, as mentioned earlier, is our technological illustration being obviously gendered in its diverse displays, in its architecture, performance, use, speed, driving, risk-taking and others. The way the artifact is materially modelled hides for instance symbols and meanings related to gender and interpreted variably by society and /or specific social groups. Another case is that the fact of designing and modifying cars is still men's business "par excellence" (Faulkner, 2001; Lohan and Faulkner; 2004, Belkmar, 2012), regardless of the important number of females who have successfully reached the car use on the road. Still another masculine creativity is car nicknaming as one verbal way of modifying cars as will be tackled in due course.

3. Nicknaming Cars

Once the car purchase is accomplished, male owners start in many cases thinking about bringing personal touch to their vehicles. Some of them repaint their cars, others change the clothing fabric while others add materials to manipulate the external car shape, or install tools to empower some parts (e.g. speakers) of the car. In other words, "[m]odified cars are clear examples of cars being made, remade and shaped into new forms different from the ways in which they were originally designed. Like most cars, modified cars express gendered meanings" (Balkmar, 2012: 44). Another way of modifying one's car is by altering, as said earlier, the artifact name. Men tend to symbolically choose a different rather than the original car name as a tool of self-expression. The way the car is modified changes over time, varies from one social group to another, and car nicknaming is no exception universally. Hence, what does 'nickname' mean?

Persson (2013) reports that the word comes from the Old English "eacan", Middle English "eken", with the meaning of "to add to or increase"; it is another additional name or an "also name"⁶ over one's legal name. Persson lists a number of domains, family, army, school, virtual sceneries, bands, sport groups, in which nicknaming occurs and has been

⁶ Skipper & Leslie (1990) (reported in Persson, 2013)

investigated. He also reports that this practice of nicknaming starts targeting people at an early age (e.g. parents nicknaming their children) for the purpose of establishing a distinct and closer connection with them. Still on the basis of former researches, the author concludes that nicknaming embodies,

- (a) physical characteristics
- (b) personal habits and mental traits.
- (c) personal histories with cultural or ethnic background
- (d) rhyme play or hypocoristic renditions of personal or family names

Nicknames, according to Persson, carry social functions featured by an inclusionary and exclusionary character: They either aim at endorsing relationships or tend to make barriers with the nicknamed bearers. If nicknaming targets an object like a mobile phone or cars, pursues the writer, this can be the result of a special passionate link inside the nicknaming user towards the material (see 6).

Our present study of nicknaming cars attempts to shed light on how technology conveys psychological, social and cultural messages (Balkmar, 2012). Through this practice, male car modifiers aim to construct, show and identify their selfhood. They, as users, distinguish themselves from car designers as they both may attribute different meanings to the vehicle. Interpretation and intention may still be different in spite of their possible overlapping; the designer intends while the user interprets and modifies the car expecting society to re-interpret his modification with positive evaluation. If it is the case, the modifier can impose his identity and make of his (the user's) car modification an accepted social behaviour. As Algerian modifiers, on what basis do the males nickname their cars? How could car nicknaming be interpreted in the current setting? We will attempt to answer these questions below.

4. Methodology

The current investigation rests principally on observation and elicitation. Our observation as members of the present speech community was casual at the outset. A car (re)nomination takes place seemingly among Algerian males who attempt hence alternation of the technical naming or brands originally attributed to automobiles. Our curiosity was aroused for elicitation for more clarity. We started the process of checking data and asking approachable males such as siblings and acquaintances (friends, colleagues, friends) for more

details. The responses (see 5) stimulated further our interest and found it therefore worthier to exploit the phenomenon within an academic frame. As another step of elicitation, we decided to interview a different population. Our choice fell on our students⁷ to whom access was expectedly possible. We asked them questions like “do you nickname cars?”, “what are car nicknaming items that you know?”.

We attempted other questions which might serve and nourish our interpretation of the findings subsequently. We enquired for example students as “why do you think cars are nicknamed?”, “why do you think most of car nicknames are feminine items (e.g. /laguna/ not /lagun/; / apunija/ not / apuni/)?”. Sixty informants (eighteen males and forty two females aged between eighteen and twenty two mostly from western Algeria were involved in this research. They were first year BA degree, second year BA degree, first year Master degree, second year Master degree, registered in one of the areas of English, Medicine, Pharmacy or Journalism. University rooms and campuses were the places of interviewing. Facebook was also used as a means of enquiring students over a distance. Therefore, elicitation overall varied between oral and written.

5. The Results

A metaphorical⁸ female nomination is mainly observed among male drivers in their reference to vehicles. The informants’ responses to the question how cars are nicknamed reveal that similarities between cars and (non-)living things motivate modification and/ or change of the original car appellation. On this basis, our data will bear two classifications according to the way cars are nicknamed. How data is composed (socio)linguistically constitutes the first classification while we will adopt the second categorisation mentioned in Section 3.

5.1. (Socio)linguistic Composition

Twenty three common car nicknames have been collected and gathered in this research. /muqatila/ *fighter* (R 25); /biri/ *beret* (Renault Magane); /bunja/ *fist* (Clio 2002); /dabaana/ *fly* (Clio Campus); /mbalga/ *wide-eyed* (Mercedes 1995); /luuza/ *almond* (Mercedes); / apunija/ *Japanese* (Clio 1); / upa/ *mole* (Hilux); /marti/ *Maruti*; /kawkawa/ *peanut* (Mercedes); /zari a/ *grain* (Mercedes); /mardasa/ *Mercedes* (Mercedes); /kab / *sheep*

⁷ Other students were involved as friends of our students (a friend of a friend ((Milroy, 1987) reported in Swann et al, 2004))

⁸

(Renault Kangoo); /i aana/ *devil* (BMW); /l aguna/ *mute* (Laguna); /fakruna/ *turtle* (R4), /mu allima/ *Maruti*; /batman/ *batman*⁹ (Renault Magane); /faraa a/ *butterfly* (Clio 3); /samakatar / *land fish* (Audi); /a ara/ *insect*¹⁰; /papij / *butterfly* (Clio 3); /r a a/ *bullet Volkswagen Golf*.

Nineteen nicknames have a linguistically, nominal, adjectival or participial, feminine-based formation /muqatila/ *fighter* (R 25); /bunja/ *fist* (Clio 2002); /dabaana/ *fly* (Clio Campus); /mbalga/ *wide-eyed* (Mercedes 1995); /luuza/ *almond* (Mercedes); /apuniya/ *Japanese* (Clio 1); /upa/ *mole* Hilux; /marti/ *Maruti*, /kawka/ *peanut* (Mercedes); /zari a/ *grain* (Mercedes); /mardasa/ *Mercedes* (Mercedes); /i aana/ *devil* (BMW); /l aguna/ *mute* (Laguna); /fakruna/ *turtle* (R4), /mu allima/ *Maruti*; /faraa a/ *butterfly* (Clio 3); /samakatar / *land fish* (Audi); /a ara/ *insect*; /r a a/ *bullet Volkswagen Golf*, such that /marti/ *my wife* is semantically feminine, while the rest is feminised on the basis of their suffixal attachment to /a/. Only four nicknames appear masculine-based /biri/ *beret*; /kab / *sheep*; /batman/ *batman*; /papij / *butterfly* (Clio 3). As the first gendered category constitutes the majority, we will restrict our attention in this study to feminine car nicknaming. More than one nickname could be assigned to one car as in the case of *Maruti* : /mu allima/ *a female teacher*; /marti/ *my wife*. Not all the nicknames have the same frequency of occurrence; some are employed more frequently than others as alternatives to the original car names.

Sociolinguistically on the other hand, Algeria is a diglossic multilingual country where several language kinds come into play during the process of nicknaming. While diglossia designates a situation in which a high variety (e.g. Standard Arabic) and low variety (e.g. Dialectal Arabic) co-prevail, multilingualism refers to the use of more than one language. As expected, most of the nicknames are syntactically and/ or morphologically dialectal given that the low variety is the Algerian majority's mother tongue as in: /bunja/ *fist* (Clio 2002); /dabaana/ *fly* (Clio Campus); /mbalga/ *wide-eyed* (Mercedes 1995); /luuza/ *almond* (Mercedes); /marti/ *Maruti*, /kawka/ *peanut* (Mercedes); /zari a/ *grain* (Mercedes); /mardasa/ *Mercedes* (Mercedes-benz); /i aana/ *devil* (BMW); /l aguna/ *mute* (Laguna); /fakruna/ *turtle* (R4); /r a a/ *bullet Volkswagen Golf*.

Some other nicknames are supplied in the high variety as in /muqatila/ *fighter* (R 25); /mu allima/ *Maruti*; /faraa a/ *butterfly* (Clio 3); /samakatar / *land fish* (Audi); /a ara/ *insect*

⁹ A fictional American character known to the present community in TV films, cartoons and serials

¹⁰ Classical cars with a big shape (e.g. Volkswagen Combi)

(Volkswagen Combi), whereas different others are formed to represent French borrowing¹¹: / apunija/ *Japanese* (Clio 1); / upa/ *rat* Hilux. Originally, / upa/ comes from /top/ with the meaning of *mole*. In the Algerian context, the term is readjusted with the new meaning of *rat*.

5.2. *Physical Characteristics: The Car Architecture*

The most noticeable car nicknaming source is the physical appearance of the vehicle and the way it is modelled from the outside. The car physical characteristics criterion in other words “...is one of the more common practices. It is a simple nicknaming practice, in which the nicknames reflect the surface appearance of the objects in one way or the other.” (Persson, 2013: 88). Our findings demonstrate that the new males’ appellation assigned to vehicles implicates the whole shape or parts of the car, depending on this car design. To recall, literature writings are increasingly detecting gendered meanings and imaginings hidden behind any materialistic shaping of automobiles.

5.2.1. General Physical Appearance

Cars are shaped differently though they may share many similarities in their overall external appearance. Some designs can be inspired from nature and appear to take the form of living things such as animals and insects. Significant data illustrate animal-like-designed cars as in the case of Toyota type Audi. Many male drivers in the Algerian west see the form of this car as the fish silhouette, an impression that makes both things seem similar in their movements, too. One of their differences yet is the context of their circulation. While fish manifests its motions within the sea, the land is where the car circulates. To compare and differentiate, Audi car nicknaming is indicated as *land fish* /samakat al ar /. Another example still regarding the resemblance between the overall car design and animal shape is the female appellation / upa/ *rat* (see 5.1) with reference to Toyota Hilux. The standing position of this animal (rat) and the car looks straight with their front high and back low. An important resemblance is also observed between the appearance of the car front sided windows and the rat ears.

Despite the obvious differences in size, insects, as well, take a referential part in the female appellation given to cars. Indeed, the male speech community finds that Renault Clio 3 is similar in many ways to a *butterfly* /faraa a / (see 5.1), such that the car back looks like the wings of this insect while the car front like the butterfly head. The esthetical appearance also

11

comes into play as it can have impacts on the male driver's inner state. One common feature that he may consider is the beauty shared between Renault Clio 3 architecture and the insect butterfly. Attention is drawn towards him and this might give him the happy feeling of flying when driving such a car.

5.2.2. Front lamp

Obviously, males pay particular attention to the shape of lamps located in the car front. Metaphorical association still takes place rather yet with other living things namely plants and mankind. Dry fruits are the plants in question in indication to Mercedes type enjoying more than one dry fruit appellation. Some male nominators nickname this car on the female basis of *almond* shape of its front lamps /luuza/; some others opt for the shape of *peanut* /kawkawa/, whereas other nicknaming males favour *plant grain* /zari a/ though less commonly following our sociolinguistic observations.

The fact that the three names /luuza/, /kawkawa/ and /zari a/ are grammatically feminine nouns does not hinder the occurrence of participial and adjectival nicknaming elsewhere and here, car humanisation obtains. Take the illustration of Mercedes type which is participially nicknamed /mbalga/ with the meaning of *wide-eyed*. This nomination probably results from a size comparison between the current car front lamps and women's eyes looking large. Male drivers would implicitly like through this manner of nicknaming to describe this female category that is for them under constant feelings of astonishment, fear, anger, or simply possess naturally overopen eyes.

A distinct adjectival nicknaming is, too, still concerned with comparison between the design of front lamps and female eyes' shape. However, it does not presently tackle the size but the lamp form similarly to nominal /luuza/, /kawkawa/ and /zari a/. As a case in point, the front lamps of *Renault Clio 1* look as long, upper orientated and drawn as the eyes of a female *Japanese* in many ways. Clio 1 is nicknamed / apunija/ *Japanese* consequently.

5.2.3. Car back

In addition to the general physical appearance of the car as well as its front lamps, other nicknames are allocated to vehicles in consideration again of the physical characteristics particularly car back silhouette. The shape of Renault Clio is one example which can be examined from a 3-dimensional circular point of view. It resembles to a large extent for many

male drivers to the human hand fingers, like those of the boxer, held and grouped together. Hence, nicknaming choice has fallen upon /*bunja/ fist* to designate this type of car.

5.3. Personal Habits and Mental Traits

Contrary to physical characteristics, this criterion entails the physiognomies of the internal parts of the object. Here, the car is humanised through personal and mental clues that are primarily mankind features. In our findings, nicknames that drop under this heading tackle either the car speed or power.

5.3.1. Speed

We have up-to-now seen that nicknaming the physical characteristics of the car shows that our male drivers pay a lot of attention to their vehicles from the outside. This is not the whole story since the inner features are not excluded either from providing cars with new etiquettes as different from the original appellation. Speed is one internal trait that can be prominently questioned for example during the car purchase negotiations. To nickname cars with respect to their speed, the males make reference to animals, insects and other inanimate objects to say whether the car is fast or slow. Our tentative description of the emerging similarities out of this comparison is outlined as follows.

In the case of the French Renault, Clio Campus is nominated /*dabaana/ fly*. The way such an insect is created and this car designed draws attention to resemblance between them. The fly is known for natural quickness giving rise to flashing movements in the air due probably to its lightness. Managing flexibly the car components such as the accelerator, brake, clutch, steering wheel and gearbox facilitates, likewise, the car mobility and alleviates the weight of the vehicle while performing speed. Our second example, Volkswagen Golf, is designated /*r a a/ bullet* of which speed is of course unarguable. As soon as released from the weapon, the human eye is evidently incapable of catching bullets as they get out briskly. A good number of Algerian males are impressed by the speedy car type Volkswagen Golf and tend to express their attitude through re-nominating such vehicles as /*r a a/ bullet*.

Unlike the French Renault Clio Campus and the German Volkswagen Golf however, the French Renault 4 (R4) is assessed among the male driving community as inactive and slow-moving in spite of its good long-standing performance, they acknowledge. This materialistic item is still today reliable for a number of drivers who therefore stand and cope with its slow motions. The car made its first appearance during the sixties and was stylishly used until the nineties. After that, it started to become reputable as ancient and old-fashioned. Watching R 4

movements reminds many Algerian males of the sluggish unhurried steps of the *turtle* /fakruna/ with the heavy shell or box-like found on it and forming part of its shape. In sum, R4 is denominated /fakruna/ as both are the symbol of slowness and delay.

5.3.2. Power

Another car inner trait that can lead to nicknaming the car is its power. The car is powerful if it has a high reliability engine (or motor) converting one given energy into mechanical energy. The car BMW is popularised for its well-designed engine. It is comparable to female *devil* /i aana/ since both are able of performing unexpected but powerful acts. While the devil is culturally portrayed able to affect and interfere in human decisions, despite its abstract state, the robust motor of this car type allows and prepares it to move on stiff surfaces which may seem impossible for circulation at first sight.

A different example relates to the female nickname *fighter* /mugaatila/ to designate the French car Renault 25 (R25). Compared with BMW, this car looks out-of-style and, like R4, old-manufactured. However, it is famous for its effectual engine that can resist driving on tough lands; and similarly to fighters, it is perceived as enough potential and ready to undertake adventurous movements anywhere on the ground. R25 thus reflects the female image of force and persistency.

5.4. Personal Histories with Cultural or Ethnic Background

This third criterion involves individuals jutting their own experience or history onto technological artifacts such as cars (see (Persson, 2013)). It should be mentioned here that cars in Algeria enjoy such a financial importance in the market that their value varies from very high to less high which could be another factor that stimulates car nicknaming to symbolise the matter. In our present corpus, this scheme can comprise the nickname /mu alima/ *female teacher* standing for Maruti (beside /marti/ *my wife* that will be treated in the next section). On account of the high car prices, it is obviously noticed that Algerian teachers' income does not tolerate them to easily get a car in the short term. The importation of cars type Maruti in the last years nevertheless has made it possible to overcome this obstacle owing to their less high prices. In addition to such expenses, males culturally find this kind of car more suitable for female teachers perhaps due to the small size of the car which certainly gives access of control to female drivers.

5.5. Rhyme Play or Hypocoristic Renditions of Personal or Family Names

The fourth standard namely *rhyme play or hypocoristic renditions of personal or family names* on the other hand implies linguistic adjustments that hit the original car names to play frequently the role of humorous nicknames (see Persson, 2013) usually attributed to family members or close acquaintances. Some data at hand have apparently been processed likewise including /marti/ *my wife*, /mardasa/ *Mercedes*, /l aguna/ *mute* and standing respectively for Maruti, Mercedes-Benz, Renault Laguna. Whereas /marti/ and /l aguna/ convey social meanings, the nickname /mardasa/ is semantically meaningless and entails no more than humoristic intent; it is probably meant to personalise and spoil the car as if it were someone emotionally closer. Phonologically, elimination of /u/ has occurred to obtain /marti/ instead of /maruti/, while the opposite process, addition, has taken place in /l aguna/ such that its / / does not exist in the original /laguna/. As for the technical name *Mercedes*, it has gone through diverse phonological processes that are elimination, inversion and vocalic modification to obtain finally the nickname /mardasa/.

6. Symbolic Practices of Car Nicknaming

Why cars are nicknamed is another key question for a better understanding of nicknaming phenomenon. One social variable that reflects society in its relationship to language and technology as indicated is gender. Technology is gendered (see 2.1) and car nicknaming in the

Algerian west is mainly male. In fact, the participants' answers imply that the male practice of modifying cars linguistically or alter the car names is motivated by various social needs (Buchaman, 2016) and has largely gained positive attitudes (ibid) among Algerian males. One important reason behind men's car nicknaming according to a number of our participants is the technicality of the original nomination: Many laymen find it complex and difficult to remember those technical names ascribed to vehicles. Some of them may even go for claiming the original car appellation as unserviceable and useless. Their reaction is probably due to insufficiency in their received education. In other words, this population may have linguistic limitations regarding technology and seek for simplification through nicknaming cars. Technical terminology is simplified by means of modification or substitution for familiar entities surrounding them, such as animals and insects. Such individuals relate the car appellation to what is already known to them or required naturally during their life-span. In this way, different car types are more easily and effortlessly indicated by/to them.

An additional reason, say a group of our informants, underlying the prevalence of car nicknames is business. Nicknaming cars can indeed lead to fruitful commercial connections as it can be widely diffused to become known among different socio-economic male categories. In this way, contactual negotiation will be smoothed between the different parts of the car dealers and thus pave the way for agreement on car exchange or purchase. A third motivation is that the male Algerians would tend to identify their paradoxical presence within the car field of hard masculinity characterised by danger, dirt, heaviness and skill (see 2.2). It is the area of designing where they are not hopelessly designers¹². The Algerian policy of importing instead of manufacturing cars makes them content with the position of owning cars. Getting a status different from car manufacturers affects their vision to these artifacts and pushes them to use alternative ways to display their distinct identity as car possessors only. They may find their path through linguistic processes specifically nicknaming automobiles leaving their masculine mark on one of the most favourable machines and hoping overall for society's positive feedback.

Male Algerians, on the other hand, find pleasure in using technological devices. Particularly, they feel impassioned attachment towards cars (see 2.2) whereby they can manifest their enthusiastic energy. Automobiles are actually means of masculine entertainment and nicknaming them is a tool (humorous in many times) that can produce a lot of fun among male individuals and bonds. Such sentimental perceptions may witness development to intimacy. The car can be humanised to become considered, according to some informants, a (specifically female) family member (e.g. sister, daughter, wife) or friend. To express this attitude for example, certain car nicknames give the impression of spoiling the vehicle in the human way to indicate the prevalence of an intimate relationship between the car and the owner. The case of modifying *Mercedes* into /mardasa/ reminds us of names like / ajra/ *Kheira*; /zuhra/ *Zohra*; /amal/ *Amel*; which may be heard as / ajruur/; /zuzu/; /amala/ respectively to say that these individuals are special to those who nickname them.

7. Car Womanisation: Domination or Difference?

Our last but not least question to informants, to recall, was “why do you think most of car nicknames are feminine items?” which can be interpreted from linguistic and extra-linguistic viewpoints. Linguistically, car nicknaming is frequently feminine because it is perhaps widely believed that the word “car” is itself feminine in different language varieties

¹²

present in Algeria as in Standard Arabic /sajjara/, French “voiture” and Dialectal Arabic /luto/ which is basically a French borrowed word abbreviated from “automobile”. The second point of view is sociolinguistic and can be largely explored within the frame of gender studies particularly the theories of dominance and difference. Before that, one of the deductions, we can draw, from our data collection is that women are detected to be outsiders to the community of nickname givers. Literature (see 2.2) refers to femininity as “soft” masculinity performed rather in untrained, light, less risky, hygienic, boring and non-machinery scopes which is not the case of car domains. Nicknaming cars has apparently an inclusionary/exclusionary character (Persson, 2013) as it is ostensibly a male practice. A man tends to display his “hard” masculinity (see 2.2) through car nicknaming like he does in car driving or risk-taking. This artifact can be culturally assessed as a vital support in masculine-identity building.

From a dominance theory perspective, we came recurrently in our elicitation cross notions like “domination”, “power”, “control”, “authority”, “possession”, “leadership” and “(dis)empowerment” exerted by men over cars. This can be associated with Faulkner’s (2001) belief in such notions as characteristics of masculinity and technology to give rise to their common cultural hegemony within society (see 2.2). Gendered car nicknaming is one manifestation of unidirectional hegemony of males over technology. Specifically, the character “inclusionary/ exclusionary” of car nicknaming could be due to the fact that genders are unequal in power of labelling cars. While men tend to largely give female nicknames to cars, women do not obey to the opposite process of supplying cars with masculine nominations. In other words, men are empowered by their high possibility of objectifying women through giving female nicknames to automobiles in contrast to women who are excluded from car denomination and therefore disempowered in this context.

Many informants, for instance, attempt accentuation of possession and domination similarities between women and cars in the male mind. Some participants talk about the man’s possessive nature in the sense that he likes the possession of a car just like he has the desire of possessing a woman. This possession is seen by other informants as an emotional experience whereby men think of their car a lady who substitutes for a lady woman. These informants believe that having a car for men is like having a woman (wife, girl friend or lover). On the other hand, men’s domination is seen in their yearning of a woman in their companionship. Cars, for a number of participants, might fulfill a comparable role (e.g. the car “Maruti” is nicknamed as /marti/ *my wife*) since some drivers make use of their vehicles

during all day. Still others find that diverse cars share the feature of beauty with women; they are beautifully designed and attractively nicknamed under the male control. This could be the reason why many car advertisements involve women shown beside cars in different positions. They are objectified as models to sell product. A cluster of informants go further in their opinion to say that some men prefer buying cars to getting married.

On the other hand, the difference theorists may see the issue from another headset. Masculinity and femininity belong to distinct sub-cultures acquired through socialisation (see 1.2). From early childhood, females are usually supplied with dolls and domestic game devices whereas males are provided with small technological game gadgets like cars. Men later go for technology to appeal competitiveness and establish their masculine status at the time when women highlight human support and approve social relationships. Compared with the man, the woman consequently shows more disinterest in cars (Faulkner, 2001), a fact which can broadly demotivate her from nicknaming this material object. Many female informants confirm that they do not participate in creating car nicknames. Other females claim total exemption from this operation. “Understandably there is a larger body of work under this rubric, because vastly more women are “on the receiving end” of technologies than create them (Arnold & Faulkner, 1985)” (ibid: 80). The Algerian females therefore admit and follow the male path in nicknaming cars subsequently.

8. Conclusion and Perspectives

Car nicknaming is a gendered phenomenon in Algeria such that males predominate in creating and/ or giving new names to cars. Nicknaming cars within the Algerian speech community is only a mirror which reveals the interrelationship encompassing together language, the Algerian society and technology. Difference and domination manifest as complimentary in determining the reasons behind the occurrence of such nicknaming. Neither the dominance theory is wholly applicable nor is the cultural theory. Performative theory seems better suitable to our context. Whereas cars and femininity can overlap in roles in the eyes of men, women appear more rational in considering vehicles no more than technological materialistic objects in their service. Between objectifying women and humanising cars, is feminine nicknaming restricted to cars within technology frame? Will women get involved in car nicknaming if accounting for their observable diminishing disinterest towards cars nowadays?

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