The Silent Gendered Language of Simone de Beauvoir: Exploring the Marginalization of Women's Voices in *The Second Sex* and Its Implications for Contemporary Feminist Linguistics

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Abstract

Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) is one of the most important works of feminist theory, which explains how women are constructed as the "Other" in a patriarchal society. However, while her philosophical and sociological insights have been extensively analyzed by scholars, the linguistic dimensions of her work, particularly the ways in which women's voices are represented, muted, or limited, have been relatively neglected. This article examines the linguistic frameworks within The Second Sex, focusing on (1) how Beauvoir's language constructs or limits female agency, (2) the role of gendered vocabulary in reinforcing binary structures, (3) existentialist interpretations of gendered discourse, (4) the overlooked linguistic agency of women in Beauvoir's work, and (5) the implications of her work for contemporary feminist linguistics. This research aims to discusses how The Second Sex reveals and sometimes reinforces the marginalization of women's speech by combining linguistics and existentialist philosophy principles. This paper suggests that post-structuralist and intersectional feminist linguistics can build on Beauvoir's ideas in today's world.

Keywords: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, feminist linguistics, gendered language, women's voice, existentialism, patriarchal discourse, post-structuralism.

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Introduction

Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* published in 1949 is commonly regarded as a text in feminist thinking that highlights the idea that women are not inherently born but rather shaped by societal and historical influences into their gender identity.[1] While many academics have explored Beauvoir's impact on existentialism and gender studies through works by scholars,[2] there has been a focus on conducting a linguistic examination of her piece of writing.

The article delves into the role of language, in perpetuating the oppression of women as discussed by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. It looks at how women's voices are portrayed as passive or restricted in the text and questions whether Beauvoir's language reinforces gender stereotypes or pushes back against them. Additionally, the study explores the existentialist foundation of Beauvoir's perspective, on language and gender identity.

It is organized in the following way; initially examining how Beauvoir's work depicts women's speech, as either silenced or marginalized within conversations; then delving into the impact of gendered language on shaping societal perceptions of women; moving on to explore the merging of existentialism and language in Beauvoir's writings with a focus on linguistic empowerment; followed by a comparative review with other feminist language theorists; concluding with a reflection, on how modern feminist linguistics can build upon Beauvoir's perspectives.

The analysis is mainly based on Western philosophical and linguistic frameworks. Simone de Beauvoir published The Second Sex in a European environment where she analyzed gender and language dynamics within French society and Western cultures. The problems Beauvoir identified about female oppression and gendered speech patterns and male-dominated discourse appear across various cultures with unique manifestations. The universal application depends on how patriarchy and language function in different societies. Feminist linguistic theorists currently support that Beauvoir's Western-based observations about

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[1] Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex,* trans. (Knopf, 1953), 283.

[2] Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Sonia Kruks. *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Toril Moi. *What is Woman? And other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

gendered communication remain applicable worldwide but need examination through local cultural perspectives. The linguistic problems which stem from Western thought do not exist only in Western societies. The fundamental issue of gender-based silencing and language-based inequality exists worldwide but manifests differently in various cultural settings.

Language of Oppression and Silence in *The Second Sex*
Beauvoir often depicts women's lives as characterized by passivity and silence, in *The Second Sex* in which she mentions that a woman is destined to immanence while man is meant for transcendence.[3] This suggests that women are restricted to duties and societal norms than actively influencing them. In society's depiction of communication patterns, between genders; women's speech is frequently depicted as ineffective or overlooked compared to the authoritative speech of men according to prevailing beliefs. In one instance she says:

> A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual
> of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man. It is
> the woman who has to make herself known as a woman,
> which means that she is presumed to be Other.[4]

The passage implies that women's way of speaking is seen as distinct and different from men's way of speaking which is considered the standard, by default without any special marking or distinction in language use and power dynamics in society.[5] This unequal distribution of influence reflects feminist concerns regarding how the voices of women are systematically marginalized in both social and language contexts where women are compelled to define themselves in relation to men indicating their subordinate position, in society and language norms where men's speech is regarded as the standard form of communication while women's manner of speaking is viewed as secondary or supplementary. The way men are commonly seen as the default standard while women are viewed as different and stand out puts women at a disadvantage, in communication settings. This leads to women being silenced because their words are

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[3] Beauvoir. *The Second*, 144.

[4] Ibid, 5.

[5] Deborah Cameron. *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992); and Dale Spender. *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1980.

interpreted through the male language perspective which can make them appear credible or commanding.

Furthermore, Beauvoir points out that women's communication is frequently disregarded as illogical or emotional:

> The woman is the Other in a totality whose two components are necessary to one another. But she is subordinate, passive, frozen into an object.[6]

The woman plays a role, as the "Other", in a whole where both components rely upon each other for existence; however, she is depicted as subordinate and passive. She seems to be trapped within the confines of being an object. [7]

The portrayal here echoes the views linking women more to emotion than reason which is a contrast that feminist linguists, like Lakoff (1975)[8] and Tannen (1990)[9] have contested in their work. This assumption of women being passive and emotional than rational and authoritative leads to their exclusion, from intellectual and political conversations. This prejudice influences how women's words are interpreted; when they voice opinions they're often perceived as emotional or irrational compared to men expressing similar thoughts who are viewed as confident and logical. The categorization of women's communication, as emotional than intellectual deepens their exclusion and marginalization, in society.

Beauvoir's examination of these disparities offers an evaluation of how language plays a role, in the systematic suppression of women's voices and perspectives within society structures rooted in patriarchy. She emphasizes how patriarchal systems not limit women through norms but also constrain their ability to express themselves by employing linguistic constructs that belittle their words. This insight has implications, for the field of linguistics by emphasizing the urgency to confront and address the built-in biases in language that perpetuate the marginalization of women's viewpoints.

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[6] Beauvoir. *The Second*, 167.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Robin Lakoff. *Language and Woman's Place* (1975).
[9] Deborah Tannen. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: William Morrow, 1990).

Gendered Vocabulary and Binary Reinforcement

Beauvoir's writing uses language that is gendered both to question and at times support the idea of distinct male and female categories. Throughout her work she often compares the traits associated with men to the characteristics linked to women. This highlights how language plays a role, in defining gender norms. By highlighting this contrast, she reveals how traditional male dominated language gives men power while portraying women as emotional and intuitive. This linguistic approach perpetuates gender stereotypes despite Beauvoir's efforts to challenge them. The idea that men are associated with logic and women, with emotions has been a theme in discussions and is evident in *The Second Sex*, as a reflection of the enduring nature of these stereotypes.

Feminist linguists like Deborah Cameron (1995) contend that gendered language plays a vital role, in reinforcing norms and expectations rather than simply reflecting reality as commonly perceived by many people today.[10] For instance. According to Beauvoir's writings women have been traditionally portrayed as "fragile" and "mysterious" terms that tend to highlight characteristics of vulnerability and enigmatic qualities than autonomy or independence.[11] These portrayals harked back, to views of women being enigmatic beings whose existence is often defined by how men perceive them within society. Although Beauvoir questions these stereotypes in her work she also occasionally uses language that inadvertently reinforces them highlighting the challenge of breaking free, from rooted conventions. Despite her efforts to dismantle the idea of women being seen as "Other" her choice of words, at times unintentionally perpetuates the divisions she aims to dismantle. This contradiction mirrors the dilemma faced by linguistic theory that is grappling with the complexities of critiquing language while being constrained by its inherent boundaries.

Another language issue to consider is the prevalence of male oriented terms, in literature discussions. Beauvoir often mentions "man" as a subject,[12] a practice that has been scrutinized by subsequent feminist thinkers like Judith Butler. The reliance on male oriented terminology implies that men symbolize humanity while leaving women unnoticed. This

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[10] Cameron. *Feminism and Linguistic.*
[11] Beauvoir, 315, 142.
[12] Ibid, 25.

absence carries consequences for how women view their participation, in societal activities. Using "men" to represent "humanity" implies a hierarchy where men are considered the norm and women are seen as figures. This exclusion, in language mirrors trends of marginalization seen in male discussions prevalent in areas, like philosophy, politics and science.

The persistent use of language that favors males contributes to overlooking the contributions of women, in intellectual discussions. Feminist linguists argue that language should adapt to acknowledge and validate women's experiences of overshadow them with centric terms. Beauvoir's reliance, on these established norms highlights the difficulty of criticizing a system that influences one's perspective. Her seminal feminist work underscores the necessity of examining and adjusting how language shapes and upholds gender distinctions. Beauvoir's writing itself grapples, with these language challenges underscoring the impact of language and the ongoing importance of feminist examination of linguistic frameworks.

Existentialism and the Language of Gender Identity
Beauvoir's understanding of existentialism shapes her views, on gender and language usage in a way from others. The existentialist philosophy promoted by Jean Paul Sartre underscores the importance of freedom and individuals' capacity for creating their significance.[13] This philosophical concept suggests that people define themselves based on their choices and actions than being constrained by fixed identities imposed by forces. In her book *The Second Sex* Beauvoir applies this existentialist perspective, to the realm of gender identity by highlighting the necessity for women to assert their autonomy through self-definition and taking control of their narratives. She questions the idea that femininity's something and suggests that it is actually a societal construct placed on women by societal norms and expectations. In looking through an existentialist perspective she redirects the conversation, from predestination to the shared accountability, in defining gender roles.

The existentialist notion encounters a hurdle when it comes to language usage, for women under constraints. How can they authentically convey their thoughts and feelings if bound by societal discourse norms? While existentialism champions absolute freedom of choice and action; language

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[13] Jean Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*, trans. (France, Philosophical Library, 1943).

stands as a man-made construct that frequently imposes boundaries upon women's ability to articulate their narratives effectively as expressed by Beauvoir through the acknowledgment of this conflicting reality:

> Language is inherited from a world that has always belonged to men.[14]

This comment that we have inherited our language from a world that has long been dominated by men as mentioned on page 686 underscores the built-in gender bias in language systems. If men have largely influenced the development of language it's logical that it mirrors viewpoints, value systems and concerns. This poses a challenge for women endeavoring to establish their identities free, from conversations. The vocabulary used to portray women's experiences is frequently distorted by a standpoint making it challenging for women to express their truths without perpetuating established clichés.

This idea aligns with criticisms that suggest language isn't impartial but is influenced by prevailing ideologies of Spender, and Mills. Dale Spender's (1980) viewpoint emphasizes that language functions, as a mechanism of authority by upholding established power hierarchies where men are positioned as the norm while women are regarded as the "Other".[15] In a vein, Sara Mills examines how communication sustains presumptions about gender roles presenting challenges, for women asserting themselves in male dominated environments. [16] Beauvoir noted that women face obstacles to their freedom not from norms but also from the language they rely on to communicate their thoughts and experiences.

Therefore, even though Beauvoir supports women's freedom in existence the language resources, at their disposal are limited. Women are urged to ascertain their identities. They must accomplish this within a linguistic framework that has traditionally marginalized or belittled them. This contradiction highlights the importance of creating structures that empower women to express their identities without being restricted by male dominated systems. Beauvoir's existential standpoint lays the groundwork for theories, in language demonstrating how language shapes

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[14] Beauvoir, 686.

[15] Dale Spender. *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

[16] Sara Mills. *Language and sexism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

and limits gender identity. The question that still stands is: how can women attain freedom in their existence when the methods of communication they rely upon are entwined within systems that perpetuate their oppression?

Comparative Analysis: Beauvoir and Later Feminist Linguists

Beauvoir criticized how language limits women's expression; later feminist linguists, like Robin Lakoff and Deborah Tannen expanded on this with studies on women's speech patterns. In her work *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) Lakoff asserts that women's speech often includes elements, like hedging and tag questions that suggest indirectness and possibly contribute to the perception of their inferiority.[17]

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) questions the structures found in language based gender classifications and extends Beauvoir's concepts by exploring the idea of whether gender is a rigid classification itself. Butlers' theory of performativity proposes that language plays a role, in shaping gender identities of just mirroring them.[18]

Post-structuralist Feminist Linguistics: Deconstructing Gendered Language

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* established the foundation for grasping gender as a product of society; however, post-structuralist linguists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler have expanded on this idea by questioning the firmness of classifications. Their research questions the notion that language simply mirrors reality suggesting instead that language plays a role, in shaping and bolstering gender identities.

Julia Kristeva: The Semiotic and the Symbolic

In her work *Revolution in Poetic Language,* Kristeva discusses the difference between the semiotic and the symbolic aspects of language. The symbolic element pertains to the rule-bound realm of language linked to systems and logical discussions. Meanwhile the semiotic aspect is described as an Oedipal form of communication connected to the maternal body and rhythm. Kristeva asserts that conventional language frameworks

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[17] Lakoff, *Language and Woman's Place*.
[18] Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble* (1990).

often overlook the importance of the dimension by prioritizing male centric discourse over women's voices.[19]

In *The Second Sex* by Beauvoir even though she doesn't directly address these theories she acknowledges a similar trend wherein women are often left out of intellectual discussions historically and pushed towards expressing emotions in a non-rational manner.[20] Kristeva builds upon this idea by proposing that women need to challenge established norms to regain control, over language use; a task that Beauvoir viewed as essential yet formidable.[21]

Luce Irigaray: Women's Language and the "Mimicry" of Patriarchy

In her work *This Sex Which is No One* on language structures criticized by Irigaray, she argues that conventional discourse is essentially focused on males. she proposes that women should create their language systems to break free, from limitations. One significant idea she introduces is the notion of mimicry; this involves women adopting "the language of men"[22] in order to have a voice but sometimes inadvertently upholding the structures they seek to overcome.

This concept is closely linked to Beauvoir's claim that women are often constrained to shape their identities based on men's perspectives.[23] While Beauvoir doesn't present a language system as a solution, to this issue her recognition of how women are marginalized in language resonates with Irigaray's view that male dominated language hinders genuine female communication.

Judith Butler: Gender Performativity and the Limits of Beauvoir's Language

In *Gender Trouble* Butler (1990) building on Beauvoir's assertion that womanhood is not innate but acquired[24] (Beauvoir 2011, 283) expands on

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[19] Julia Kristeva. *Revolution in Poetic Language* (Columbia University Press, 1984).

[20] Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, trans. (Vintage, 2011), 523.

[21] Kristeva. *Revolution in Poetic.*

[22] Luce Irigaray. *This Sex Which is No One*, Trans. by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 76.

[23] Beauvoir, 267.

[24] Ibid, 283.

this idea by introducing the concept of gender performativity. According to Butler gender is not a fixed identity but a role that individuals enact through communication and social engagements. [25] This perspective questions Beauvoir's belief, in an authentic female identity.

Butler's analysis of Beauvoir's work underscores the constraints of relying on language in a sense. *The Second Sex* frequently delineates between males and females, as groups which reinforces frameworks that subsequent feminist thinkers aim to deconstruct. Beauvoir questions these dichotomies but remains constrained by them; in contrast Butler's perspective proposes that gender is flexible and influenced by communication strategies.

The Marginalization of Women's Speech in Beauvoir's Feminism

Beauvoir often talks about how women's opinions are disregarded as illogical or lacking authority, in discussions of feminist linguistics concerns raised by researchers, like Dale Spender and Deborah Cameron. They argue that the male dominated dialogue diminishes the significance of women's speech in a way that goes beyond history to become an issue rooted in communication structures. In societal realms women frequently face challenges, in gaining acknowledgment as existing biases depict their communication as subordinate, to that of men.[26]

Examples of Women's Linguistic Marginalization in *The Second Sex*

Beauvoir gives instances where women's words are consistently ignored and undervalued in society. She points out the collaboration of backgrounds, social norms and personal relationships, in undermining women's credibility, in language usage.

Women's voices in history

According to Beauvoir women have not often had opportunities, to author works due to a lack of authority, in shaping intellectual discussions:

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[25] Butler. *Gender Trouble.*
[26] Cameron. *Feminism and Linguistic;* and Spender. *Man Made Language.*

> Women have rarely been authors of great works of philosophy, because they were denied the authority to shape intellectual discourse. [27]

This statement shows the exclusion of women, from literary circles which hinders their participation in philosophical and theoretical dialogues. The historical absence of women's voices, in texts is not because of their lack of capability. Stems from limited opportunities and acknowledgment.

Men's dominance in conversation

According to Beauvoir in private interactive exchange, society often perceives a woman's words as less trustworthy compared to a man's. She faces the challenge of having to exert effort to earn respect and credibility:

> Even in private life, a woman's words are seen as less credible than a man's. She must work harder to be taken seriously.[28]

In studies, about gendered communication trends are observed like Deborah Tannen which points out that men's way of speaking is usually viewed as confident and commanding compared to women's way of speaking that is often seen as hesitant or emotional which creates a situation where women have to constantly demonstrate their competence even during casual talks. It points towards a structural bias in communication which continues to shape gender dynamics in both personal and professional spaces.[29]

The infantilization of women's speech

Beauvoir acknowledges the fact that in both personal and professional spaces women's words are sometimes seen as small-talk compared to men's speeches which are viewed as words of wisdom:

> A woman's speech is often dismissed as chatter, while a man's is considered wisdom.[30]

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[27] Beauvoir, 634.

[28] Ibid, 527.

[29] Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand*.

[30] Beauvoir, 412.

The tendency to belittle women's speech perpetuates the notion that what they say's insignificant; a view supported by Robin Lakoffs highlighting the portrayal of women's language as weighty and consequently sidelining them from crucial conversations. The points made here are, in line with studies, on how men and women communicate based on gender stereotypes in conversations today.

Reclaiming Women's Linguistic Agency in Contemporary Feminist Linguistics

Beauvoir points out the silencing of women's voices does not offer a linguistic approach, to empowering them in response to this issue. Modern feminist linguists have aimed to fill this void by promoting shifts, in language usage and discourse frameworks to support women's empowerment.

Strategies for Linguistic Empowerment
Gender-inclusive language

Beauvoir uses "homme" or "man" as a universal category[31] while modern feminist linguists such as Cameron and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet suggest gender-neutral terms, like "humanity" or "people."[32]

Reframing women's speech as authoritative

Spender argues in favor of questioning the belief that women's speech lacks authority. Beauvoir acknowledges in her work that women face challenges, in being heard and understood but does not provide suggestions, on how they can overcome this obstacle through language tactics.[33]

Creating Feminist Discourse Spaces

Online communities and activist groups focused around feminism are establishing spaces that emphasize the voices of women as a focus. In these debates today Beauvoir's ideas still hold weight but contemporary platforms provide freedom in how we express ourselves.

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[31] Ibid, 25.

[32] Penelop Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet. *Language and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[33] Beauvoir, 528.

Contemporary Feminist Linguistic Activism:
Expanding Beauvoir's Insights
Even though *The Second Sex* was considered revolutionary during its era today's feminist linguists have built upon its concepts to discuss intersectionality, digital communication trends and language advocacy. Beauvoir's examination of the exclusion of women set the stage for these dialogues. Modern feminist academics have delved deeper into how language intertwines, with ethnicity, social status and advancements, in technology.

Intersectionality and Language
Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the idea of intersectionality in 1989 to show how various social factors, like race and class can impact women's experiences uniquely.[34] Beauvoir criticizes how language supports power but focuses mainly on gender through a Western lens leaving out the varied effects of linguistic marginalization, on women based on their social status.

For instance, Black feminist academics, like bell hooks (1981) claim that language discrimination isn't solely a matter of gender but one of race.[35] African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and other minority linguistic styles are often disregarded as inferior which mirrors exclusion trends. Likewise, Native and working-class women encounter challenges in establishing credibility. These viewpoints expand upon Beauvoir's concepts to explore how language operates as a tool, for both gender based and racialized suppression.

The application of Beauvoir's feminist linguistic analysis to native language systems like Urdu or Punjabi requires examining how these languages embody patriarchal values. The Urdu language demonstrates gendered word forms through which masculine terms function as standard references. Many Urdu proverbs and idioms together with common expressions depict women as weak and emotional and dependent. The marginalization Beauvoir described appears in these patterns. Native languages possess distinct cultural and religious elements which shape

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[34] Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politic," *University of Chicago Legal Forum,* No. 1 (1989): 139–67.

[35] Bell hook. *Ain't I a Woman?* (New York: Routledge, 1981).

their characteristics. The application of Beauvoir's theory requires local linguistic adjustments to avoid Western conceptual imposition while identifying comparable gender inequality patterns. Native languages such as Urdu also contain gender bias in their proverbs and idiomatic expressions. The South Asian speech patterns and expressions contain patriarchal ideas in the same way Beauvoir described French language. A localized feminist linguistic analysis would reveal how native languages contribute to women's marginalization.

Digital Feminism and Online Discourse
The evolution of communication has changed the way in which women interact with language dynamics considerably altered with the rise of media platforms as they offer new opportunities for marginalized voices to contest prevailing patriarchal narratives.

Hashtag activism (MeToo, TimesUp and SayHerName)
Hashtag movements, like #MeToo and #TimesUp have played a role in elevating the voices of women and shedding light on the issue of gender based violence, within society's structures. They showcase how online conversations can shift power dynamics by enabling communities to share their stories and confront the silence upheld by institutions.

Feminist discourse in online spaces
Online platforms, like Twitter and blogs provide a space for women to create narratives that challenge the language limitations discussed by Beauvoir.[36] The digital realm allows for a form of resistance through language use which highlights the importance of language, in movements.

Contemporary feminist linguists are carrying forward Beauvoir's ideas to shed light on how language marginalizes women in aspects of identity today.

After gaining power women will leverage their educational freedom together with their political involvement and media presence and digital capabilities. Women who gain equal access to language and communication can create new narratives while challenging stereotypes and contribute to intellectual and public discourse with authority and

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[36] Beauvoir, 534.

independence. Women who gain empowerment and freedom can use their freedom to achieve change in multiple essential domains:

i. Through language and communication women can recover their right to speak write and express themselves without any form of censorship or fear. Their opinions will gain proper recognition during academic discussions as well as social and political dialogues.

ii. Education provides women with the freedom to study alongside teaching and conducting research without any restrictions based on gender stereotypes.

iii. Through empowerment women gain equal access to participate in political discussions and hold leadership positions and make decisions in public forums.

iv. Women can express themselves through literature media and arts to present their own stories while fighting against conventional representations.

v. Women possess the ability to establish and maintain control over their content on social media platforms and other digital spaces while using language as an activist tool for representation.

The five areas demonstrate how unrestricted language usage creates a platform for women to fight against oppression while building new social structures.

The Ongoing Relevance of Beauvoir's Linguistic Analysis

In this article we've delved into the aspects of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* by shedding light on how women's perspectives are shaped and suppressed in male dominated conversations. Simone de Beauvoir uncovered these trends. At times her choice of words inadvertently perpetuated gender stereotypes; a constraint that subsequent feminist linguists have tackled.

Below are the main points to remember:

- Beauvoir's examination of how women's speech's undervalued and suppressed corresponds, with feminist linguistic criticisms.
- Sometimes her use of gender language can unintentionally uphold the binaries she is trying to break down.

- Kristeva, along with Irigaray just like Butler are post-structuralist feminists have built upon her ideas by challenging the reliability of gendered language.
- Contemporary feminist linguistics provides tactics for empowering women to assert themselves through language use by promoting gender language and engaging in digital discourse activism.

In the end of the day even though *The Second Sex* is a piece of work feminist linguistic theory has progressed to deal with obstacles. By examining and building on Beauvoir's concepts researchers could effectively break down the language systems that uphold gender disparities.