

A Sociopragmatic Study of Feminism: A theoretical Perspective of Feminist Discourse

Shahad Kareem Hadi

**University of Kufa- faculty of Arts Department of English
Language**

Shahadkarram@gmail.com

Assis. Prof. Dr. Hasan Hadi Mahdi

**University of Kufa-faculty of Arts Department of English
Language**

hassan.mahdi@uokufa.edu.iq

دراسة تداولية-اجتماعية للنسوية: من منظور نظري للنسوية

شهد كريم هادي

جامعه الكوفة - كلية الاداب - قسم اللغة الانكليزية

استاذ مساعد دكتور حسن هادي مهدي

جامعه الكوفة - كلية الاداب - قسم اللغة الانكليزية

Abstract:

The current paper is an attempt to approach feminism in Sociopragmatic structures. It pragmatically tackles feminism in this feminist work. Consequently, it aims to: explain the socio-pragmatic structure of feminist discourse that is the socio-pragmatic elements of which the feminist discourse of the theoretical work under study is composed; identify the most frequently socio-pragmatic strategies that are made use of feminism depicted in the work under study; To fulfil the aims of this study in which it is hypothesized that Speech acts, deixis, presupposition, conversational implicatures and politeness are the major pragmatic strategies of the feminist discourse of the novel under investigation. Moreover, Sexism, power, dominance, gender elements are the crucial sociolinguistic elements that construct the sociolinguistic construct of the feminist discourse. Finally, there are some interrelationship between pragmatics and sociolinguistics to find the overall feminist view.

ملخص:

ان الورقة البحثية الحالية هي محاولة لمقاربة النسوية خلال عناصر التداولية. حيث تتناول تداولية ظاهرة النسوية في هذا العمل الأدبي البارز. وبالتالي، فهي تهدف إلى: دراسة البنية الاجتماعية التداولية للخطاب النسوي الذي يتكون من المكونات الاجتماعية التداولية التي يتكون منها الخطاب لهذا العمل؛ والكشف فيما إذا كانت الاستراتيجيات قد ساهمت في بناء بعض الموضوعات الرئيسية للنسوية قيد البحث. لتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة، يجب أن الأفعال الكلامية، والإشارة اللغوية، والافتراضات المسبقة، والضمانات التخاطبية، والملاءمة، والتأديب هي المكونات التداولية الرئيسية للخطاب النسوي للعمل قيد البحث. علاوة على ذلك، فإن عناصر التمييز على أساس الجنس، والسلطة، الهيمنة، والجنس هي المكونات اللغوية الاجتماعية التي يتشكل منها البناء اللغوي الاجتماعي للخطاب النسوي. في نهايه توجد ترابط متجانس بين علم الاجتماع والتداولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاجتماعية التداولية، التداولية، علم اللغة الاجتماعي، الهيمنة، النسوية. القوة، المساواة، الجنس والعناصر التداولية

Key words: Sociopramatics,
Pragmatics , Sociolinguistics ,
power, Feminism ,power , gender ,
Sexism and Dominance

Table of contents

Abstract.....	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معروفة.
1.Introduction	662
1.1 The Problem of the study.....	662
1.2The Purposes of the study.....	662
1.3 The Hypotheses of the study.....	663
1. 4 The Procedures of the study.....	663
1.5 The Limits of the Study	663
1.6 Value of the Study.....	663
2.Fiminism :ATheoretical Perspective of Feminism	664
2.1 Feminism Defined.....	664
2.1.1 Feminist and Theories.....	664
2. 1. 2 Sociolinguistic issuee of Feminism	666
2.2 Scope of pragmatics	666
3. A Sociopragmatic issues of Fiminism.....	668
3.1 Socio- pragmatic Structure of Feminist Discourse.....	668
4.Disription of Feminist Discourse	669
4 .1 Language use and Social Attitudes Toward Gender	670
4.2 Conclusion	672
References	672

1.Introduction

1.1 The Problem of the study

Feminist theory, in general, does not just demand description and analysis of women's oppression but also requires theories within which an analysis can lead to solutions for oppression (*Gardner*, 2006). Yet, it is explaining that the socio-pragmatic aspects of feminism and/or feminist discourse have not been allotted its due attention from pure pragmatic perspective aided by socio-linguistic aspects and strategies. To do so, the present work tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most widely used socio-pragmatic strategies that can be exploited in opening, maintaining and ending a feminist discourse?
2. What are the most significant socio-pragmatic strategies utilized by one feminist writer to achieve each of the functions of the feminist oriented-discourse?
3. What are the differences in the employment of the sociopragmatic tools used for achieving the functions of the feminist discourse?

1.2 The Purposes of the study

The aims of the study:

1. Investigate the socio-pragmatic structure of feminist discourse that is the socio-pragmatic components of which the feminist discourse of the novels under analysis is composed.
- 2- Reveal whether the pragmatic strategies mentioned above have contributed to some of the major themes of the novels under scrutiny.
- 3- Develop a model for the pragmatic analysis of the feminist discourse of these novel.

1.3 The Hypotheses of the study

It is hypothesized that:

1. Speech acts, deixis, presupposition, conversational implicatures, and politeness are the major pragmatic components of the feminist discourse under investigation.
2. Sexsim, power, gender, dominance components are the essential sociolinguistic elements that construct the sociolinguistic construct of the feminist discourse.
3. Assertive speech acts and deictic personal expressions that are combined with sex and age socio linguistic aspects are the most common socio-pragmatic strategies of the feminist discourse under scrutiny.

1.4 The Procedures of the study

To contain the aims of this work and test its hypotheses the following procedures are adopted:

1. The relevant literature about the feminist discourse is reviewed.
3. The percentage equation is utilized to calculate the findings of the analysis.

1.5 The Limits of the Study

This work limits itself to the investigation of the feminist discourse-related to Sociopragmatic structures that have been opted out by the researcher for their richness in feminist-related perspective.

1.6 Value of the Study

The present work is thought to be of value in the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, applied pragmatics due to its concentration on the socio-pragmatic aspects of feminist discourse.

2.Fiminism: ATheoretical Perspective of Feminism

This chapter shows the nature of the term feminism, and provides a background about the important issues of feminism and those related to it in general. However, there is a certain emphasis on the Socio - pragmatic issues relevant to feminism.

2.1 Feminism Defined

According to feminists, it is a social system where men are the dominant authority figures, control property, occupy leading moral authority roles, and are responsible for protecting women and children in the household (Guo,2018:454).

Feminism focuses on women's experiences in natural social settings, where it is intended to make women visible, raise their consciousness, and empower them (Gelling ,2013).

2.1.1 Feminist and Theories

There are a group of related theories that share several principles in common in which all these pricipcles will illustrate as following

A-Feminist theories maintain that gender-the socially constructed expectations about the attitudes and behaviors of women and men (Renzetti,2018:1).

B-In studies on language and gender, in the study concluded that language is sexist as they use lexical choices from a masculine viewpoint. Linguistic representation in this line of thought, is no longer neutral and transparent means of representing reality, but androcentric (Talosa & Malenab, 2018).

2.1.1.1 Feminist Discourse Features

There are several features in common:

- Oppression may be a central term in feminist discourse; but, it's typically in agreement that there's nobody shared means that completely different social teams are burdened or expertise oppression (Gardner,2006:163).
- For the women, radical theorists cannot just substitute nonsexist expressions for sexist ones, because there is not neutral language currently in existence (Cameron,1992:129). The entire system, since it belongs to men and is controlled by them, is permeated by sexism through and through(Gardner,2006:164).
- The objective of pragmatic theorizing is to gain knowledge of a concrete, social reality and to concentrate on issues related to human experience, not to resolve abstract philosophical difficulties (Gardner,2006:175).
- The concept of essentialism is not dependent on the term "humanism," yet formulations of essentialist perspectives on gender tend to be viewed as much more problematic by many feminists than humanism. (Lawson,2009) .

2.1.1.2The differences in the way of conversation

Differences between women and men have always been a topic of interest to the human species

- Minimal responses: Research examining the usage of minimal replies consistently demonstrates that women use them more frequently than males (Coates ,2013:87).
- Hedges: The idea that women use more hedges in their speech has led to the description of women's speech as "tentative." (Coates ,2013:88). Hedges can make communication polite and flexible (Vlasyan ,2019).

- Tag questions: One of the most famous arguments made by early feminist linguists was that men and women employ tag questions differently and consistently (Hepburn & Potter ,2011). Robin Lakoff (1975) suggested that there is a 'linguistic rule' that women will use tag questions more than men (Bonvillian,2007:334).
- Politeness and language: Being polite is a widespread social phenomena that is viewed as a moral norm in interpersonal interactions and social interactions (Yuni et al. ,2018). Hence, women are politer than men (Coates ,2013).

2. 1. 2 Sociolinguistic issue of Feminism

- Gender roles are based on the many expectations that people, groups, and societies have of people based on their sex as well as on the values and beliefs that each civilization has towards gender (Blackstone,2003).
- The Dominance Approach was first put forth by Robin Lakoff in 1975, who claimed that men are inherently more dominating than women, particularly in the way they speak to or act around them (Gyamera ,2012:64).
- Power is the key variable in the two main theories of gender oppression, psychoanalytic feminism and radical feminism (Crossman,2021).

2.2 Scope of pragmatics

pragmatics includes a wide range of topics such deixis, presupposition, the cooperative principle, implicature, and speech act and politeness

- **Speech acts:** According to Searle, a "full sentence" formed under particular circumstances constitutes the "illocutionary act," which is the "fundamental unit of human language communication" (Senft, 2014) Illocutionary activities have a "impact" on the listener. There are several types of speech acts

as: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarations.

person plural pronouns to express something. On the other hand, the man students are more likely focus on using first person singular pronoun and the second person p

- **Deixis** : Levinson (1983:68–94) is credited with coining the term "deixis," which he categorizes into five categories: person, location, time, social, discourse, and discourse. An existential presupposition is the assumption that the entities the speaker mentions exist.
- **Presupposition** :there is a certain form of meaning relationship where the utterance of one statement appears to indicate the veracity of another sentence (Kroeger,2018). This particular inference is referred to as a presupposition . There are several types of presupposition : Existential , factive , non-factive , lexical and counter factual pressupoasitions.
- **Conversational implicature** :The essential component of Grice's Conversational Implicature Theory is the cooperative principle (Grice, 1975). The prespective of cooperative principles from the perspective of gender highlights the necessity of addressing discrimination against women in the many cooperative activity-related dimensions (Meira,2018). There are several types of conversational implicature as the quality , quantity , manner and relation.

3. A Sociopragmatic issues of Fiminism

3.1 Socio- pragmatic Structure of Feminist Discourse

This chapter is intended to devise the sociopragmatic issues which will be adopted for understanding of Feminism.

With reference to the socio pragmatic structure of feminism, the interrelationship surveyed below indicates that feminism is a process which involves structure. These structures are socio pragmatically built upon certain sociopragmatic components composing the socio pragmatic structure of feminism which can be illustrated as follows:

The sociopragmatic structure of th is work under study comprises certain socio_pragmatic elements including the following ones. Gender forms cornerstone in this work. it is concerned and actualized by means of three pragmatic compoenet (Speech acts, Presupposition and Politness). The other significant Socioelement is power which realized and combined with the pragmatic components of (Speech acts, Presupposition and Politness). The third Socioelement is Sexism which concerned and associated with the pragmatic elements of (conversational implicature and politness). The fourth Socioelement is domainance which accompanied an realized with the pragmatic elements of (Politness, Deixis and Speech acts).

The main emphasis in sociopragmatics is on appropriateness, or what behavior is thought to be appropriate or fitting to a context as well as what behavior is thought to be correct or proper in that setting (Haugh, 2021:326). This is due to the fact that language use is essentially reflexive: We always use language with an eye toward how we believe others will interpret and assess it. Many theorists, including feminists and anti-feminists, have made an effort to demonstrate that men and women communicate in distinct ways (note again that men are the norm and women defined in relation to them).

The main emphasis in sociopragmatics is on appropriateness, or what behavior is thought to be appropriate or fitting to a context as well as what behavior is thought to be correct or proper in that setting(Haugh,2021:326). This is due to the fact that language use is

essentially reflexive: We always use language with an eye toward how we believe others will interpret and assess it . Many theorists, including feminists and anti-feminists, have made an effort to demonstrate that men and women communicate in distinct ways (note again that men are the norm and women defined in relation to them).

The social and intergroup relations theory known as social dominance theory focuses on how individuals create hierarchical belief systems that serve as a foundation for institutional supremacy (Islam,2013). It entails research on who is most likely to possess these views, how those attitudes develop, and what the implications are for cognition and behavior.

4.Description of Feminist Discourse

The present paper is intended to show on describing this study. The results of describing for each structures are introduced.

Sociopragmatics is particularly relevant for historical pragmatics because of the reliance of historical studies on contextual information. Historical pragmatics in general, as an independent subfield of pragmatics, started out in the last decade of the previous century when pragmatist's increasingly began to be interested in earlier stages of individual languages and when historical linguists started to develop an interest in pragmatic research questions (Michael Haugh et al.,2021:687).

With subfields in sciences like linguistics, sociology, and psychology, pragmatics is viewed as a vast superordinate field (Verschuereen 1999: 7). A "broad cognitive, social, and cultural viewpoint on linguistic phenomena in connection to their use in forms of behavior" is what is meant by this statement. In contrast to the more linguistic side of pragmatics, sociopragmatics is situated on the more social side of the discipline. The development and comprehension of meanings resulting from interactions between language (or other semiotic resources) and socio-cultural phenomena are at the center of this study. Situated

interaction, especially at the local and meso levels, is its primary focus (e.g. frames, activity types, genres).

According to Leech, sociopragmatics should adhere to the original distinction between pragma linguistics and sociopragmatics as independent research areas that are related to but slightly distinct from general pragmatics (1983). As a result, pragmatics is viewed as a vast superordinate field with subfields in linguistics, sociology, and psychology. A general cognitive, social, and cultural viewpoint on linguistic phenomena in connection to their use in behavioral forms is presented (Verschueren 1999: 7).

As for the concept of "sociopragmatics" Leech created the term to designate a branch of pragmatics that focuses on how pragmatic meanings reflect "particular "local" conditions on language use," as opposed to more "universal" pragmatic meaning (Grundy,2014). In creating sociopragmatics, and more specifically, "how speakers' presentation of their identities entails communication of pragmatic meaning."

4 .1 Language use and Social Attitudes Toward Gender

Language as a component of a particular social community's social behavior (Gu , 2013). The relationship between gender and language has primarily been investigated in reference to the disparities between the language of men and women from various perspectives and techniques. The phrase "language and gender" refers to the interaction between masculine and feminine languages. Gender differences are reflected in both men and women's speeches as well as in how they live their lives and how they view the world.

language is in a social environment that is constantly changing. In addition to being influenced by gender, language is also influenced by social, cultural, and psychological aspects.

There is a greater awareness in some parts of the community that subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, distinctions are made in the lexical and pragmatic vocabulary used to describe men and

women(Nordquist,2020). However, there is still considerable doubt that changing waitress to waiter or describing Nicole Kidman as an actor indicates a real shift in sexist attitudes.

Gender as a social category has come to be seen as highly fluid, or less well defined than it once appeared (Litosselit & Sunderland,2002). Researchers interested in language and gender have focused increasingly on plurality and diversity amongst female and male language users. This is mainly an alternative theoretical conception of gender, though there are suggestions that identities are loosening so that in many contexts people now have a wider range of identity options.

Lakkof (1975) claimed that the following words are frequently heard in women's language:

- Hedges: the use of qualifiers like "kind of" and "kind of"
- The (very polite) expressions "Would you mind..." and "If you don't mind".
- Tag questions: "You're going to lunch, aren't you?"
- Speaking in italics: Emphasis is placed on certain words such as 'very' and 'so', emulating the written function of italics.
- Empty adjectives: 'lovely' and 'adorable'.
- Hypercorrect grammar

Expletives: Women avoid expletives and taboo lexis.

- Humour: Women lack a sense of humour and can't tell jokes.
- Indirect requests: Women ask for things more subtly.
- Modal Constructions: More modal constructions like "Should we open the door to let some air in?" are used by women
- Intensifiers: Women tend to use intensifiers more frequently, such "I'm so glad you could make it."
- Imperatives: More "wh" imperatives are used by women, such as "Why don't we go out to dinner?"

4.2 Conclusion

On the basis of the description that is done above and the major findings arrived at in the present work, it can be concluded that:

First of all, the perspective, which is developed by this study proves to be workable in conducting a socio-pragmatic perspective of feminism since it contains exhaustive and flexible pragma-linguistic strategies distributed over sociolinguistic strategies. Second, there is a strong relationship between the socio pragmatic strategies employed in achieving feminism and some of the major themes in this work, particularly love and marriage. Third, the assertive and expressive speech acts along with the presupposition and deictic expressions are the most frequent pragmatic devices that are coupled with power and sexism to contain the feminist based aims. Finally, gender and power are the most noticeable sociolinguistic components that are used in association with the other pragmatic substrategies to maintain and nurture the feminist-oriented situations.

References

- 1- Crossman, Ashley. (2021, February 16). Feminist Theory in Sociology. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/feminist-theory-3026624>. (n.d.).
- 2- Grice, P. (1975). "Logic and conversation". In Cole, P.; Morgan, J. Syntax and semantics. 3: Speech acts. New York: Academic Press.
- 3- Guo, R. G. (2018). Brief Analysis of Feminist Literary Criticism. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, 300.
- 4- Gyamera, V. (2012). *The Interface: Language, Gender and Power*. University of Lleida, Spain.11(1). <https://doi.org/0.14746/jgp.2019.11.004>.
- 5- Kroeger, P. (2018). *Analyzing meaning: An introduction to semantics and pragmatics*. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- 6- Leech, G., (1983), *Principles of Pragmatics*, London: Longman Group.

- 7- Liddicoat, A. J. (2011). "Feminist language planning". Current Issues in Language Planning. 12(1): 1–7. doi:10.1080/14664208.2011.548314. S2CID 143756727.
- 8- Levinson, S. C. (1983). Pragmatics. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 9- Lakoff, Robin, 1975. Language and woman's place. New York: Harper Colophon.
- 10-Meira, D. (2018). Ooperativism and Gender Equality: From Principles to Practices in Governance Bodies Composition on Cooperatives in Portugal. Congreso Internacional de Investigadores En Economía Social Y Cooperativa.
- 11-Haugh, M., Kádár, D., & Terkourafi, M. (2021). The Cambridge Handbook of Verschueren, Jef (1999). **Understanding Pragmatics**. London: Arnold.
- Gelling L .(2013). **A feminist approach to research**. Nurse Researcher. 21, 1, 6-7.
- Gu, L. (2013). **Language and Gender: Differences and Similarities**. Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2991/asshm-13.2013.46>
- Blackstone, Amy. 2003. "**Gender Roles and Society**." Pp 335-338 in Human Ecology: An Encyclopedia of Children, Families, Communities, and Environments, edited by Julia R. Miller, Richard M. Lerner, and Lawrence B. Schiamberg. Santa Barbara, CA:ABC-CLIO. ISBN I-57607-852.
- Nordquist, Richard. (2020, August 27). **Gender (Sociolinguistics)**. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/gender-in-sociolinguistics-1690888>.
- Litosseliti, L. and Sunderland, J. (eds.) (2002). **Discourse Analysis and Gender Identity**. Amsterdam: Benjamins.