



Face Threatening Act as a Representation of Gender Discrimination in the Novel 'Zinah'

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Abstract—Avoiding FTAs (Face Threatening Acts) is one of the politeness strategies that needs to be practiced to build effective communication. Unfortunately, FTAs often become a habit that is difficult to avoid, and they are sometimes intentionally performed by certain individuals with the aim of humiliating specific social groups. In Arab literature, it serves as one of the means employed by the Arab society to depict the reality of social and cultural life among the Arab nation. One dominant cultural aspect within Arab society is patriarchy. In addition, gender discrimination is a frequently highlighted issue in literary works. This research aims to explore the forms of FTAs spoken by the characters in the novel "Zinah". The novel is the last work written by Nawal el-Sa'dawi, an Egyptian feminist known for addressing gender issues boldly. The results of this research indicate that FTAs are expressed in the form of directive speech acts, which serve to command, warn, and impose opinions, as well as expressive speech acts in the form of insults. All FTAs are directed towards women and represent a form of gender discrimination, including subordination, stereotypes, and verbal violence. All male characters in the novel use religious elements to discriminate against women.

Keywords—*face-threatening acts; pragmatics; arabic literature*

I. INTRODUCTION

The social relationships among communities shape the way they communicate with each other. Social distance and the differences in the status of the speaker and the interlocutor determine the choice of words and the amount of words used in communication, thus linguistic interaction is also referred to as social interaction [1]. In other words, it can be stated that the effectiveness of the language used, the chosen diction, and the attitude conveyed to convey the intended message are influenced by the social relationship established by the speaker with their interlocutor. [2]. In this case, the use of language as a medium for communication necessitates the use of politeness strategies to facilitate smooth communication.

Politeness is a social phenomenon expressed through the use of language. According to Brown and Levinson [3], politeness is the way a speaker conveys their speech as politely as possible to minimize conflicts with others. Politeness strategies assist speakers in minimizing Face-Threatening Acts (Face Threatening Face). FTA (Face-Threatening Act) is an act that inherently damages the face of the interlocutor or speaker through actions that contradict the wishes of the other party. Face-threatening acts can threaten another person's face through looks, expressions, or non-verbal communication [4]. Experts have differing opinions regarding the principles of politeness that apply to specific regions or cultures. Some argue that face and politeness principles are universal (Terkourafi, 1005 via [5]). Meanwhile, another group argues that cross-cultural politeness variations, or within cultures, exhibit differences [5].

The term "Face" in the perspective of Brown and Levinson [3] is the self-image that every member of society wishes to claim. The concept related to 'face' originates from Goffman, which is related to the feelings of shame, humiliation, or 'losing face.' Thus, face is something that is emotionally invested, it can be lost, and it can also be maintained. Therefore, in interactions, one should preserve their own face and also the face of others by avoiding speech that threatens one's face [3]. This will make social interactions full of politeness and harmony.

The definition of Pragmatics, as mentioned by Levinson in his book [6], is as follows: '*Pragmatics is the study of the relationships between language and context that are grammaticalized or encoded in the structure of language.*' This definition emphasizes the importance of context in pragmatics, and within the framework of pragmatics, context can be constructed through the differentiation of meaning, which can be observed through the use of lexicon, morphology, syntax, and phonology.

This article examines sentences that identify face-threatening acts in one of the Arabic novels titled 'Zinah'. Violations of politeness are incongruent with Arab culture, which holds Islamic values in high regard. However, such violations are ironically prevalent and immortalized in literary works as a reflection of life. The face-threatening acts frequently carried out by male characters in the novel 'Zeina' appear as representations of their understanding of gender. The portrayal of gender in Arab society is often articulated in literary works. Hence, it is stated that literature is a medium that has the freedom to express ideas, concepts, and truths [7].

Gender discrimination in Arab novels is often boldly voiced by the Egyptian novelist and feminist activist named Nawal el-Sa'dawi. Her works have been translated into various languages and read by many people around the world. The proliferation of translations of Nawal's books over the last two decades demonstrates her rising career, especially in various English-speaking countries. In fact, Nawal's novels have been translated into English shortly after their original Arabic publication. This is undoubtedly an achievement, as it is a rare occurrence for translated books to be published in English so close to their original release. It's no wonder that she has been accepted within Western feminism circles and has taught at various universities such as the University of Washington and Duke University, as well as being a visiting lecturer at several other prestigious universities [8, p. 216].

Novels in the feminist genre written by Nawal generally depict Egyptian culture, which still regards women as subordinate to men. Education for women is considered unimportant because women are seen as belonging to the domestic sphere. This aligns with the historical fact that girls' schools in Egypt only emerged in 1875. This may have been influenced by the low economic level, which was also affected by a growing population that did not align with economic advancement [9].

This research is necessary to examine how gender discrimination is realized through language, especially in impoliteness aspects. In simple terms, gender refers to the attitudes or characteristics associated with males or females that are constructed by society or culture. Meanwhile, sex is an attribute inherent to a specific biological sex or due to nature [10, p. 8]. Understanding the differences between these two fundamental aspects is the key to avoiding falling into the concept of gender discrimination.

Gender regulates the primary processes and practices of society in various sectors, such as employment, family, politics, law, education, medicine, the military, religion, and culture. In practice, gender also functions as a system of power that grants privileges to certain individuals or groups and disadvantages others in positions of power. For example, race, ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation [11, p. 9]

Gender differences are fundamentally natural as long as they do not result in gender inequality. However, in reality, these differences do indeed give rise to gender inequality. Gender discrimination can manifest in various ways, including marginalization, subordination, violence, and double workloads. [10]

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research related to gender is conducted using various approaches, including a linguistic approach [12]–[16]. Through a linguistic approach, researchers examine how language is used by men and women in a particular culture or society. The research of language and gender employs sociolinguistics. In the research conducted by [13], researchers found that women tend to use polite interjections, employ question sentences for agreement or confirmation, utilize hedges to express uncertainty, and employ intensifiers to emphasize something in their language.

Furthermore, gender discrimination is also extensively studied using a literary approach [7], [17]–[20]. Feminist literary criticism and literary sociology are widely employed as analytical tools in research using this literary approach. Feminist literary criticism is also extensively utilized to dissect Arab novels [21]–[24]. The results of the research [7] using feminist literary criticism show that the roots of oppression carried out by men against women in the novel 'Zeina' are based on the justification of religious arguments, making the oppressors men who are religiously devout. Ironically, they do it with both love and hatred. The female characters in the novel also engage in a reconstruction of patriarchal binary oppositions, allowing women to become subjects. Furthermore, the research also found that the novel 'Zeina' voices a socialist Islamic feminism that valorizes local wisdom and human well-being.

Politeness and impoliteness are often studied in various media, such as talk shows, social media, and mass media, as seen in the following research [4], [25]–[28]. The results of previous studies have shown the use of politeness strategies and violations of politeness, as well as the types of impoliteness uttered by speakers in various media. However, research related to impoliteness in Arabic novels that is associated with gender discrimination is still rarely undertaken by researchers, hence the opportunity for discoveries remains wide open.

III. METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative research. It is termed qualitative because it uses linguistic phenomena as discursive data. The data in this research consists of expressions of impoliteness leading to gender discrimination, whether in individual words, phrases, or sentences found in the novel 'Zinah'. This research regards linguistic phenomena as plural (not singular), holistic, and inseparable from their context. Therefore, the researcher must understand the 'worldview' because all these phenomena are unique and context-dependent [29, pp. 34–35]

The research design employed in this research is a fixed research design, as the researcher determined the research focus and objectives from the outset. The research focus is on expressions that manifest impoliteness leading to gender discrimination in the novel 'Zinah'.

The approach used in this research is the feminist approach because it is closely related to the gender inequality present in the text [29]. Feminism is a social movement whose fundamental goal is the equality between women and men [11]. Additionally, pragmatics is also employed as an approach in this research. The pragmatic theory used in this research is the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson, which focuses on negative face-threatening acts (FTAs) uttered by speakers to their interlocutors.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After data classification was performed, the researcher found that the face-threatening speech act most frequently used in this novel is the negative face-threatening speech act towards the interlocutor. Therefore, the researcher focused on examining that part and classified it according to their respective speech acts.

A. Directive Speech Act

This type of speech act is a type of speech intended by the speaker to make the hearer do something in accordance with what is mentioned in their utterance.

Commanding

[30, p. 9] أَكْتُبِي اسْمَ أَبِيكَ وَجَدَّكَ يَا جِمَارَةَ

Translate: Write the names of your father and grandfather, you donkey's child.

The utterance was spoken by a teacher to her student, Zeina, who was instructed to write the names of her father and grandfather, but she did not write them because she does not have parents like other children. This sentence indicates gender discrimination in several aspects. First, in the context of the story, a student's identity is determined by her father and grandfather, not by her mother and grandmother. This is a form of subordination, where women are viewed as second-class citizens after men.

Subordination is when an individual or a group occupies a lower position in the social or occupational hierarchy. Subordination in the context of gender, particularly in the case of women, places them in unimportant positions, and this awareness results in various decisions that disadvantage women. For example, women do not have equal access to education as men [10].

Another example of a sentence that functions as a command is the following:

[30, p. 187] "أعربي عن وجهي أيتها الحية الرقطاء، التي أخرجت آدم من الجنة"

"Stay away from my presence, O slanderous serpent who led Adam out of paradise!"

The sentence is spoken by Zakaria, the main character in the novel, to Badriyah, a woman. The sentence is categorized as an expression that threatens face by humiliating the interlocutor who is a woman. The male character uses religious elements to attack his conversational partner, associating women as the ones who caused Adam to be expelled from paradise.

This sentence also falls within stereotypes, which involve labeling or marking of a particular group. In terms of gender, stereotypes also give rise to gender injustice. For example, when women are labeled as trying to attract the opposite sex through grooming, it leads to the misconception that violence and sexual harassment are caused by women [10]. Because the historical interpretation suggests that Adam was expelled from Paradise due to Eve's seduction, women have often been labeled as temptresses to this day.

To warn

The expression that portrays a warning is evident in the following sentence:

[30, p. 128] "شرف البنت زي عود الكبريت يشتمل مرة واحدة فقط، مرة واحدة فقط مرة واحدة فاهماني؟"

"The honor of a daughter is like a matchstick that ignites only once. Only once. Once and for all. Understand?"

The statement was said by a father to his daughter (Bodour) who wanted to go outside. This sentence contains a warning to the interlocutor to always be cautious, as a woman's honor is likened to a matchstick that can only be lit once, meaning that when her honor is taken away, she is considered worthless in the eyes of society. This falls under the category of stereotype of women because when a woman or a man engages in sexual relations outside of marriage, it's not just the honor of the woman that is lost, but also the honor of the man, who is also an actor in that act.

However, in the general community, it is often women who are more frequently labeled as disrespected or marginalized, as opposed to men. Consequently, gender stereotypes have an impact on how both men and women define themselves and how they are treated by society at large [31]

Forcing an opinion

""هذه الفتاة فاجرة، يعني إيه أعلى من الدنيا والآخرة؟ ما فيش حاجة أعلى من الآخرة ياكافرة؟" [32, p. 146]

"This prostitute woman... What does it mean, most precious in this world and the hereafter? There is nothing more precious than the hereafter, disbelievers!"

The speech were spoken by Ahmad ad-Damhiri to Zeina, a female singer who is the main character in the novel. In her earlier statement, Zeina said that her mother is the most precious person in the world. Then, Ahmad disagreed and insisted on his opinion that the most precious is the afterlife. The male character in the novel uses religious elements, which is the afterlife, to insult the woman, calling her a 'prostitute' and an 'kafir'.

Forcing an opinion is one of the utterances that threatens the face of the interlocutor, as it does not allow the interlocutor to provide any argument according to their preference. In addition to enforcing one's will, this utterance also carries a derogatory meaning by using offensive terms such as 'prostitute woman'.

The next example is the following sentence

لا يعيب الرجل أن يكون له قضيب متمرّد لا يعرف التقوى أو خشية الله، لا يعيب الذكور أن يسبحوا في البحر بالمايوه، أما النساء فإن وجوهن عورة فما بال الفخذين أو الساقين أو حتى الذراعين، أفتى الأمير أن صوت المرأة عورة أما جسدها فكل جزء فيه عورة حتى الرأس مركز العقل والتفكير. [30, pp. 222–223]

Men are not considered shameful if they possess an arrogant masculinity that lacks piety or fear of God. Men are not considered shameful if they swim in the sea wearing swimwear, whereas the face of a woman alone is considered 'aurat,' let alone her thighs or calves, up to her arms. Amir decreed that a woman's voice is 'aurat,' let alone her body, so every part of her body is 'aurat,' including her head, the center of her intellect and reasoning.

In addition to imposing its own argument, the sentence also constitutes discrimination against women. The last word is the culmination of marginalization in the text. Women's intellect and reasoning are considered 'aurat' (private), thus women are not entitled to express their opinions or present their arguments. Therefore, in Islam, many rules of worship, such as Islamic jurisprudence (fikih), are determined by men. This is not because women are less intelligent, but rather due to the limited opportunities historically afforded to women, which were not equal to those provided to men. As a result, the role of women in the public sphere was quite limited

The next example is the following sentence

يحق للأمير أن يملك من النساء ما يشاء [30, p. 218].

Amir has the right to have any woman he desires.

The statement represents an argument used by men in selecting a partner. Men have the right to choose, while women do not. This, of course, constitutes gender discrimination with women as the target. The type of gender discrimination in the sentence is subordination, where women are considered lower than men, and as a result, they have the right to be chosen but not the right to choose.

B. Expressive Speech Acts

This type of speech act serves to express the feelings experienced by the speaker. Feelings of happiness, anger, annoyance, and so on, which are felt by the speaker, are reflected in the words they utter.

Insulting

Insult is one of the expressions that threaten the face of the interlocutor because it can damage the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor and can embarrass the interlocutor in their social interactions. Insulting is one of the most frequently encountered speech acts in this novel. Interestingly, because the backdrop of this novel is Egypt, a country where the majority of the population is Muslim, and the Arab people are known for their association with Islamic symbols, insults often have a basis in Islam, as in the following example:

أحل الله للرجال الإمام والجواري وما ملكت اليمين فما باله وهو الأمير؟ [30, p. 141].

Translation: "God allows men to make women into slaves, especially if he is an Amir. "

The expression constitutes an insult towards women because it suggests that men have the ability to make women into slaves. However, the era of slavery has ended, and in the present time, slavery is considered a

violation of human rights. Nevertheless, it is alarming how easily the speaker invokes Allah to support their argument.

Another example of expressions that demonstrate insult is the following sentence:

[30, p. 122]. "المراة حليفة الشيطان، النظافة من الإيمان والوساخة من النسوان"

"Women are allies of Satan. Cleanliness is a part of faith, and impurity is a part of women."

The sentence constitutes an insult as it portrays women as allies of Satan and categorizes them as impure. Similar to the previous example, this insult indirectly invokes religion, as it mentions faith, one of the signs of which is cleanliness, and portrays women as impurities, which is the opposite of cleanliness. Consequently, the implication is that women lack faith.

The words above fall into the category of verbal violence or verbal abuse, which are speech acts that demean, tease, ridicule, mock, insult, and threaten. Furthermore, it can also be practiced through indirect words or paralinguistic signals such as tone of voice, body language, or gestures accompanying speech [33, p. 588].

The figurative language in the expression is almost similar to the verse in the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 222, which mentions that menstruation is impurity and the requirement to keep away from women who are menstruating. However, this verse certainly does not indicate that women are impure. Although historical facts show that women who are menstruating are often 'avoided' or 'separated,' the verse indicates a different form of prohibition..

Insulting

“لا يوسخ الرجل الصالح المؤمن إلا المرأة” [30, p. 216].

No one defiles righteous and believing men except women."

This sentence constitutes an insult towards women who are regarded as unclean and contaminating creatures. The use of 'la' followed by the word 'illa' indicates that only women are the cause of a man's impurity. Viewing women as unclean or disruptive creatures is a stereotype, labeling women as disruptors of men. Stereotypes reflect common expectations of certain members of social groups. However, in reality, not all individuals can serve as examples within their social group due to the inherent differences among them [31].

Insulting

[30, p. 238] "إخرس يا ولد اخرسى يا بنت، ده سعادة الأمير الباشا يا أولاد الزنى، يا أولاد القحبة، يا أولاد الشرموطة"

"Silence, children! This is Amir Pasha, hey, children of adultery! Filthy children! Children...."

The statement was uttered by a driver to the street children. The utterance depicts his anger and frustration towards the children who blocked his car when he was entering the narrow road.

Insults in the novel "Zina" often employ harsh forms of address, as illustrated in the example above. The use of such words clearly indicates impolite expressions. Impoliteness in these sentences falls under the category of speech acts that threaten negative face of the interlocutor, as it humiliates the interlocutor.

V. CONCLUSION

The speech acts that realize expressions threatening a negative face to the interlocutor in this research consist of various types of directive speech acts, including requesting, warning, and imposing opinion; expressive speech acts that involve insults. All FTA (Face Threatening Acts) data refer to gender discrimination against women, which includes subordination, stereotypes and verbal abuse. The majority of this gender discrimination is due to gender-biased interpretations of religious verses. As a result, the perpetrators use religion as a pretext to carry out gender discrimination.

VI. REFERENCES

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