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A Socio- Stylistic Study of the Role of Social Identity in Selected Feminist Texts

A B S T R A C T

The current study explores the relationship between social identity and stylistic features in the context of contemporary feminism with reference to gender, race, and class variables. Although many studies have been conducted concerning the concept of feminist language, the relationship between social identity and linguistic features has not received enough attention, which is why the present study aims to identify the specific strategies that are used to address the goals of feminism. This research seeks to fill this gap through an analysis of twenty-four contemporary Feminist texts in articles, speeches and social media posts. Employing socio-stylistic eclectic approach, the research analyses the patterns of stylistic elements in various media contexts and analyses how such elements work with the audience as well as embody different social roles. The results of the study advance the theoretical macro-socio-linguistic paradigm of socio-stylistics by identifying the link between language and social status. In addition, the study is helpful for the leaders of feminism to know how language can be utilized in a constructive manner to advance the cause of feminism.

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دراسة سوسيولوجية-أسلوبية لدور الهوية الاجتماعية في نصوص نسوية مختارة

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل كيفية انعكاس الهوية الاجتماعية في السمات الأسلوبية من خلال تحليل النصوص التي أنتجها ممثلو الحركة النسوية، مع التركيز على مفاهيم النوع، والعرق، والطبقة الاجتماعية. تعتمد الدراسة على التحليل الأسلوبي الاجتماعي لدراسة مجموعة متنوعة من النصوص التي كتبها النسويون، والتي تشمل مقالات، وخطباً، ومنشورات على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؛ لتوضيح كيفية استخدام هذه الكتابات في التعبير عن الشخصيات الاجتماعية المختلفة والتفاعل معها.

تتمثل مساهمة هذا العمل في ثلاثة جوانب رئيسية: أولاً: على المستوى النظري، يسهم البحث في تطوير مفهوم الأسلوبية الاجتماعية وفهم كيفية تأثير عوامل الهوية الاجتماعية على القرارات المتعلقة بالأسلوب في النصوص النسوية. كما يسهم في تعميق فهم العلاقة بين اللغة والمجتمع. ثانياً: يقدم البحث توصيات عملية للكاتبات والناشطات النسويات حول كيفية استخدام اللغة بشكل أكثر فعالية، وتحديد الظروف التي يمكن فيها الوصول إلى الجمهور بنجاح. ثالثاً: يوضح البحث كيف تسهم اللغة في دعم الأجندة النسوية، وكيف يمكن تحسين استخدامها لتعزيز فعالية حركات العدالة الاجتماعية وأهدافها.

ختاماً، تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على أهمية مفهوم الهوية الاجتماعية كإسهام نظرية وعملية في مجالات الاتصال النسوي والأسلوبية الاجتماعية، من خلال تحديد التفضيلات الأسلوبية في السرديات النسوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوبية الاجتماعية، الهوية، الحركة النسوية، النوع الاجتماعي، التمييز

1.Introduction

Feminist texts can be found in different disciplines and genres; from scholarly articles to speeches by activists, and even posts on social media, which are all vital in pushing for better rights of women and change of perception of the society. All these texts are crucial in capturing as well as responding to issues of gender and social justice. It is because they challenge and challenge further the patriarchal systems and increase the representation of the oppressed (Tong, 2009). Feminist texts can therefore be said to have effects in as much as they are able to interact with the subject

in ways that take into account their social location, which may include factors such as gender, race and class (Crenshaw, 1989).

Social identity which encompasses other aspects such as gender, colour, nationality, and economic status, influences the way people receive and respond to the idea of feminism. The theories of intersectionality, which explain how two or more grounds of differentiation converge and affect the experience of power relations, are vital in explaining these phenomena (Crenshaw, 1989). For instance, the texts of feminism may employ the non-oppressive language and intersectionality to explain and depict the multifacility of social categories (Eagleton, 2000). This strategic use of language enables one to come up with messages that can be easily understood by different audience and also to be able to champion for social change (Gee, 2014). The discourse of feminism as it shares how the discourse is delivered through various forms of texts and movements. Gender Trouble by Judith Butler is beneficial to academic feminist theory as it explains how gender is done while Gloria Steinem's speech demonstrates the struggle for gender equality. These movements including #MeToo have extended this discourse by focusing on the present issues of feminism, especially through social media. These examples show how the concept of the feminist discourse encompass both academic theory and activism as well as contemporary movements that respond to the changing social contexts of gender and equality.

The primary of this study is to explore how social identity influences stylistic choices in feminist texts. This involves examining how factors such as gender, race, and class shape the language and rhetoric used in these works. The work of the study is to establish how stylistic devices are used to construct and perform social subjects. Moreover, the research aims at determining the effects of these linguistic features on the efficacy of the advocacy for feminism with a view of exploring the ways in which language influences the extent to which feminist texts can reach out to different audiences (Hall, 2013). Thus, the study is hoped to contribute a useful understanding of the social identity and stylistic orientations in the context of feminist communication and advocacy (Eagleton, 2000).

2 Socio-Stylistics :Definition and Scope

Socio-stylistics can be defined as the interdisciplinary study of sociolinguistics and stylistics to analyze how class, gender, ethnicity, age, and other social factors affect the linguistic variation and Styles. This field combines elements of sociology, anthropology, and linguistics, and focuses on the ways in which language is used to express one's social self, and how language use reflects social relations and power struggles (Gee, 2014). Socio-stylistics is concerned with the role which social factors play in determining the selection of stylistic features of language. It entails the examination of factors such as the language used (lexical, syntactic, phonological and discursive), the speaker or writer's social characteristics or the context in which communication takes place. Thus, sociolinguistic approaches to

language variation and change combined with stylistic analysis of the text give a more holistic view to the analysis of language use in various social settings (Chambers, 2009).

Stylistics is the branch of linguistic that is concerned with the analysis of style in language; it is nearly always in relation to literary texts, but can also encompass other forms of text. It involves the process of picking on aspects of language such as words to be used, structure of the sentences to be used, use of figures of speech and other ways of using language. Stylistic analysis is a practice which is concerned with the methods that authors use to achieve certain stylistic or, more broadly, rhetorical goals and it is focused on the ways in which the form and content of texts are related (Simpson ,2004).

Sociolinguistics is the study of the way language is used in society, and how language use is influenced by social factors. It discusses matters of dialectal difference, contact, attitudes, and code-switching, thereby giving the reader an understanding of how language is used to excluding and constructing social relations and selves. Sociolinguistics focuses on the relations between language and society and how language is used in society and is related to social relations and structures (Chambers, 2009).

3. Scope of Socio-Stylistics

Socio-stylistics indeed seems to have a humongous coverage of social factors and matters of language. Key areas of study include:

1. Class and Language

Vocabulary and Syntax: That is, social class can affect both the ‘‘depth’’ of syntactic structure, the ‘‘level’’ of lexical explicitness and the phonological features of a given language. For example, speakers from higher social classes might use formal language varieties, with long and specialized sentences and with elaborate lexicon than might be used by lower social class speakers who might be inclined to use more informal language variants and syntactic structures that are easily understood (Labov, 2006).

2. Phonological Features:

In Labov’s (2006) sociolinguistic survey of New York City English, it was established that higher social classes were most likely to pronounce the rhotic /r/ in words such as ‘car’ and ‘hard’ while the lower classes were likely not to. This difference in pronunciation social distinctions and classes of society and thus it deserves attention.

3. Gender and Language:

Politeness and Hedging: Robin Lakoff in 1975 pointed out that women use more polite language, hedges and tag questions (for example, ‘It’s nice outside, isn’t it?’). All these choices in stylistic aspects can be an indication of the existing society norms that women should be less dominant than man.

4. Discourse Styles:

Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1990) in her book, discussing the sex differences of speech, showed that male communication may be more adversative while female one, more support-oriented. These differences may affect some language use in a number of varieties of interaction and usage contexts.

5.Ethnicity and Language:

Ethnicity is a concept that refers to a group of people who share a common cultural heritage, including customs, traditions, and often language or religion. It's associated with a sense of shared identity and history, distinguishing one group from another based on cultural, social, and sometimes physical traits. Language is a structured system of communication used by humans. It consists of spoken, written, or signed symbols that convey meaning and allow people to express ideas, emotions, and information. Language is a core element of cultural identity and plays a significant role in forming and preserving ethnic identities. Both ethnicity and language are crucial in understanding the social and cultural fabric of human societies. Following consequences of language variations.

1.Dialect and Vernaculars: Language use is also influenced by ethnicity in that it defines the dialect or the vernacular to be used. For example, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has certain features of phonological, grammatical and lexical differences from the Standard American English. It works as an index of ethnicity and is especially significant as a marker of the solidarity of the African American people (Rickford, 1999). **2.Code-Switching:** Different codes or dialects are

employed at a particular time or in a particular location; people can alternate between one code or dialect and another. This is code-switching, a phenomenon that is evidence of the flexibility of social identity and the fact that people are always in different settings in the society (Gumperz, 1982) .

6.Context and Language:

Context refers to the circumstances, background, or setting in which communication occurs. It includes factors such as the social situation, cultural background, and specific environment that influence how language is used and understood. Language is a system of communication consisting of words, symbols, or signs used to convey thoughts, emotions, and information. It can be spoken, written, or signed and varies widely across different cultures and communities.

Together, context shapes the way language is interpreted and used, influencing meaning and clarity in communication.

1.Formality and Register: Stylistic choices depend greatly on the social context that is, the context in which the text is produced and the context in which the text is received. Formal contexts, such as academic writing or public speaking, often require different styles than informal contexts like casual conversations or social media interactions (Gee, 2014) . Language is a universal aspect of human capability and a distinct feature of human behavior. (Zaidan and Mohammed, 2020).

2.Discourse Communities: In writing, there are various social groups, or discourse communities, and each of them has its own set of language use. For instance, in

scientific writing, language is formal, factual and specialized language which is a way of presenting scientific ideas and findings (Swales, 1990).

4.Application in Feminist Texts:

In the context of the analysis of feminist texts, socio-stylistic analysis helps to determine how the authors position themselves and the addressees of the texts in the context of social identity. Thus, this approach can reveal the ways in which the authors of the studied texts appeal to their readers and work towards changing the worldviews.

1. **Inclusive Language: Gender-Neutral Pronouns:** Many of the texts that can be classified as feminist contain the so-called inclusive language, for instance, instead of using he or she, they use they. This approach is in line with the principles of the feminist paradigm that aims at acknowledging and legitimizing gender diversity (Cameron, 1992)
2. **Intersectionality:** Most of the texts by women often explore the multiple forms of oppression that exist in the society including the race, class, and gender. For instance, bell hooks, in her book (2000), uses personal testimonies to speak to her own blackness and the readers'. This makes the use of this language style subversive of the conventional language norms and underlines the race and gender in feminism.
3. **Rhetorical Strategies: Personal Anecdotes:**

4. In her essay titled 'We Should All Be Feminists,' Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses anecdotes and simple language so as to explain her view to anyone willing to listen to her. The language that Adichie uses is one that has its roots in the Nigerian culture and her aim of taking the feminism conversation to people of colour (Adichie, 2014).

5.Methodology

To understand feminist discourse comprehensively, a variety of texts are essential. The selected texts will come from a range of platforms and media to capture different facets of feminist discourse, including:

1. Academic Articles: Sourced from reputable journals such as *Signs* and the *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. These texts offer a formal and theoretical foundation for feminist issues. They often explore deep socio-cultural questions and provide a scholarly perspective on gender, power, and identity.
2. Activist Speeches: Speeches by notable feminist activists such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Angela Davis. These oral texts are rich in rhetorical strategies and emotional appeal, offering an activist's perspective on gender and social justice issues.
3. Social Media Posts: Twitter and Instagram posts from movements like #MeToo and contributions by self-identified feminists. These offer real-time,

informal insights into popular feminist discourse, reflecting the attitudes and issues discussed by the public.

The model of this study is eclectic model synthesized by the works of scholars in feminist linguistics and discourse analysis

1. Cameron (1992) - Focused on the role of language in constructing gender identities and how vocabulary shapes social interactions.

2. Eagleton (2000) - Analyzed rhetorical strategies in literature and the importance of personal narratives in engaging readers and fostering social change.

3. Hooks (2000) - Explored the intersection of storytelling and social justice, emphasizing the power of personal and collective narratives in feminist discourse.

1. Lexical Choices: The particular attention will be paid to the vocabulary that is employed in the works of feminists and how it contributes to the creation of social identities. This entails evaluating the linguistic strategies such as the use of inclusive language, reclaimed words, and technical language of the feminism and activism languages (Cameron,1992).

2. Rhetorical Devices: The study involves the identification and analysis of features of language like metaphors, analogies, and repetition with a view of understanding the way they are employed to persuade, inform, and mobilise the audience. Some of the linguistic features that are going to be discussed as features of the feminist discourse include the use of personal narratives and the use of direct address (Eagleton,2000).

3. Narrative Structures: This analysis will include the examination of how the structures of the narrative are used in the organization of arguments and the telling of a story to influence the reader in the case of the feminist texts. This entails analyzing how personal and collective stories can be used in the struggle for social justice (Hooks, 2000).

5. Data Analysis

Below is twenty -four of various feminist texts analyzed with application of socio-stylistic model.

1. Quote: “The chairperson of the committee will present the report.” — Text:

The Gendered Society by Michael Kimmel

Explanation: The word ‘chairperson’ has been used instead of ‘chairman’ in order to avoid the gender-specific reference. This lexical choice can be seen as an attempt to make a change and to make the workplace and other spheres of life less masculine-oriented and with the assumption that women cannot be leaders.

2. Quote: “Firefighter” rather than “fireman” is preferred in modern discourse.

by Patricia Hill Collins

Explanation: Use of the term ‘firefighter’ shows that there is a general inclination towards the use of gender neutral terms. This decision assists in breaking the roles that define professions based on gender, and encourages people to realize that it is possible for anyone to do any work.

3. Quote: “Humanity” instead of “mankind.” by Simone de Beauvoir

Explanation: De Beauvoir uses the term 'humanity' instead of the gendered term 'mankind' in order to encompass all genders in the discussion of the human and their rights.

4. Quote: "Bitch" used in a positive context as in "I am a proud bitch." by
Roxane Gay

Explanation: Roxane Gay talks about the use of the term 'bitch' which was originally a profanity, but feminists have taken it and used it to mean strength and defiance of oppressive language. This reclamation reclaims the term and erases the negative connotations that come with it, thus advocating for a bolder identity.

5. Quote: "Slut" as in "SlutWalks" to protest against victim-blaming. by
Heather Jo Hughes

Explanation: . Slut is reclaimed through things like SlutWalk when it is used to protest the continuing double standard of sexual conduct and for women to take back control of their sexuality. This application of the term is twisted to undermine and invert the negative gloss that is usually associated with it.

6. Quote: "Queer" used to describe diverse sexual orientations. by Jack
Halberstam

Explanation: Halberstam's choice of the word 'queer' is a good example of how what was once a slur has been repurposed by the queer community in order to express pride in non-hetero- and non-normative sexual and gender identities. This reclamation is helpful for the further understanding of sexual diversity.

7. Quote: “Patriarchy” as in “The patriarchy oppresses women and enforces traditional gender roles.” by Betty Friedan

Explanation: Friedan employs the word ‘patriarchy’ to refer to the social order where men are the rulers. This term is crucial to the analysis used by the proponents of the feminist agenda because it defines the systems that sustain discrimination based on gender.

8. Quote: “Intersectionality” discussed as “The overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.” by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Explanation: Crenshaw comes up with the term ‘intersectionality’ to describe how different forms of oppression intertwine and affect individuals in diverse ways. This jargon is important for grasping the dynamism of social identities and the nature of social injustices.

9. Quote: “Privilege” in the context of “White privilege allows individuals to move through the world without facing systemic racial barriers.” by Peggy McIntosh

Explanation: McIntosh’s use of the term privilege is to do with the benefits that some people get by virtue of their race. This term assists in understanding how oppression is reproduced and felt in different ways according to the social categorizations of power.

10. Quote: “The battle for gender equality.” by Germaine Greer

Explanation: Greer employs the use of the word 'battle' so as to describe the feminist struggle as warfare that requires one to fight. This metaphor brings out the desperate and the spirited struggle of the feminists against gender oppression.

11. Quote: "Breaking the glass ceiling." by Sheryl Sandberg

Explanation: Sandberg uses the analogy of the 'glass ceiling' to convey the concept that women cannot rise to the higher levels. This metaphor aptly describe the phenomenon of structural barriers to women's career progression.

12. Quote: "A woman's body as a battleground." by Sonya Renee Taylor

Explanation: Taylor uses the idea of the 'body as a warzone' to discuss the issues that women experience when it comes to body image and the pressures of society. This metaphor reflects the continuing struggle for women's independence and the way they choose to live.

13. Quote: "Gender equality is like civil rights; it's a fight for fundamental human rights." by Kat Banyard

Explanation: Banyard uses an analogy of the civil rights struggle to the fight for gender equality to give the overall framework of social justice struggle. In this way, the comparison assists the readers in grasping gender equality struggle as a part of the general struggle for human rights.

14.Quote: "The feminist movement is akin to a marathon, requiring persistence and endurance." by Carol Hanisch

Explanation: In order to describe the development of the women's liberation movement, Hanisch uses the concept of a marathon. This analogy means that it will take a number of years and be on going in order to achieve gender equality.

15.Quote: "Feminism is a toolkit, just like any other social movement." by bell hooks

Explanation :hooks uses the term 'toolkit' to equate feminism to show the real and varied ways of combating gender oppression. This analogy shows that feminism is a toolbox which offers different tools and strategies for addressing the social problems.

16.Quote: "We will not go back. We will not go back. We will not go back." by

Chimamanda

Ngozi Adichie

Explanation: The phrase 'We will not go back' which Adichie uses in her speech underlines the determination to continue the fight for women's rights. It is used to stress the determination and the need of the feminist movement.

17.Quote: "Equality for all. Equality for all.", by Allan G. Johnson

Explanation: Johnson employs the use of the phrase 'Equality for all' in order to stress the fact that the plea for gender equity is for everyone. Repetition in this case helps to cement the main message of the equality of all men and women.

18. Quote: "No more silence. No more silence. No more silence." , edited by E.

Summerset

Explanation: The phrase 'No more silence' is emphasized severally to show that it was high time people spoke out on issues of gender violence and oppression. This repetition serves a call to action and the call for coming out.

19.Quote: "I remember being told that I wasn't 'feminine enough' for certain roles."
,by Gloria Steinem

Explanation: Steinem employs the narration of her experience of being judged based on her failure to conform to the usual gender norms to explain more general phenomena of gender discrimination. These are concrete examples of discrimination and therefore can be easily associated with by the readers.

20.Quote: "My experience with street harassment changed my view on public spaces." by Rebecca Solnit

Explanation: Solnit also uses her own experiences of street harassment to give a personal touch and prove the existence of gender based violence. Personal narratives make the issue more personal and more real and less of an abstract concept of harassment.

21.Quote: "As a working-class woman, I felt the weight of both gender and economic oppression." , by Sara Ahmed

Explanation: Here, Ahmed employs her positionality as a working-class woman to explain how gender and class oppression work together. Real life examples are employed in the work to show how discriminations of different kinds intersect and affect people's existence.

22.Quote: “You have the power to change the world. Start today.”, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Explanation: The phrase of Adichie’s direct address is aimed to make the readers become active participants of the fight for gender equality. This rhetorical strategy is supposed to get the reader’s attention and make him or her perform an action in the nearest future.

23.Quote: “Ask yourself, what are you doing to support gender equality? ,by Betty Friedan

Explanation: To this, Friedan employs direct appeal to the readers to make certain changes in their personal attitudes towards gender equality. This method creates an impression in a person that they are being listened to and this makes them to change for the better.

24. Quote: “You must question the norms that dictate what it means to be a woman.”, by Naomi Wolf

Explanation: Wolf frequently turns to the audience to challenge the readers to think about the current standards of beauty and being a woman. This direct address is designed to encourage readers to ask questions and, therefore, resist the conventional gender norms.

By employing such socio-stylistic approaches it is possible to get a better understanding of how the language works in the texts by feminists and how it helps to mirror, create and subvert the identity and power relations in society.

Conclusion

Socio-stylistic analysis of the texts written by and for women enables the analysis of how language functions as a tool in the construction and representation of subjectivity to show how the feminist discourse works in the context of the cultural struggle for change. Through the investigation of style and linguistic features of the texts, the study reveals how language is employed in the texts by the authors to accomplish certain communicative and political tasks in relation to the discourses of feminism.

It is common for the writers of the feminist texts to use inclusive language in an effort to deconstruct the binary gender system and encourage a non-oppressive conversation. For example, using such terms as ‘chairman’ instead of ‘chairperson’ shows that language conforms to feminism, and there is an attempt to avoid stereotyping. Furthermore, the process of ‘reclaiming’ the language by using the terms considered to be negative, for example, the term “slut” is another example of how the feminist movements try to reverse the common language usage and challenge the existing prejudices.

Rhetorical strategies are instrumental in the construction of the agenda of women’s rights. Used frequently are metaphors and examples where gender equality is referred to as a “battle” or a “war”: it makes the concept more concrete and understandable to the audiences. Comparisons between the fight for women’s rights and other social justice movements make it easier to understand the place of women

within the human rights framework. The use of the phrases such as Women's Rights are Human Rights, repeat the main ideas and help the audience to remember them. The use of personal narratives and direct address in language makes the readers feel more involved in the topics of concern and make them more easily understandable.

Looking at how aspects of identity such as gender, race, class and sexuality affect styling offers an all-inclusive view of the different cross sections within the framework of feminism. For instance, the texts by female writers of color or those coming from working-class backgrounds might employ particular dialects or focus on the issues concerning the subjects' multiple positions. This interlocking of language points to a larger conception of how oppression and privilege cohere and influence people's lives.

First, of all, there are numerous advantages of such a study. It improves the theoretical work by correlating linguistic discourse with feminism, which offers ways of understanding language as a means of cognition and transformation. To activists and organizations, this study provides a roadmap of how to design messages that can champion the agendas of feminism and speak to different people. The research enhances the socio-stylistics and the feminist discourse analysis theories to show the effect of language in social advocacy. In addition, it is a useful tool for the teaching of language and identity, revealing how language can be employed strategically in order to transform social relations and build better, more just societies. In this way,

the study provides an all-embracing perspective on the role of language in the feminist discourse as well as on the ability of language to enforce change.

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