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وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي  
جامعة الأنبار



## مجلة جامعة الأنبار للغات والآداب

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تعنى بدراسات وأبحاث اللغات وآدابها

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## A Discourse Analysis of Female :Women's Voice Between Suppression and Resistance Characters in Arther Miller's The Crucible

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### ABSTRACT:

This study explores the way female characters speak in the Crucible. It examines how their speech refers to the gender roles they face in the patriarchal society of Salem. The researcher focuses on three female characters. Their voices reflect obligation, resistance and manipulation. With this aim, the study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach. It applies two gendered theories: Tannen's difference theory (1990) and Lakoff's theory of women's language (1975). Both theories help to reveal how women use language to assert their identity. The two theories also show how women negotiate authority and cope with constraints imposed on them in a male-dominated society. Major findings show that women use their voices not only for reflecting their social status, but also as a powerful tool for self-expression. This study contributes to the domain of gender and language fields. It highlights how theoretical texts embody complex relationships among gender, language and authority. The study concludes that the speech of women in The Crucible reflects their inner conflict. It reflects both suppression and resistance, and shows how they utilize speech as a means of empowerment

**Keywords:** Discourse analysis, women's voice, suppression, resistance, the

crucible.

### صوت النساء بين القمع والمقاومة: تحليل خطاب الشخصيات النسائية في مسرحية آرثر ميلر "البوتقة"

رلى فواز حماد الفراجي

قسم الفيزياء، كلية التربية للعلوم الصرفة، جامعة تكريت، تكريت، العراق

### المستخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة طريقة تحدث الشخصيات النسائية في مسرحية البوتقة. كما تدرس كيف يشير حديثهن الى الادوار الجنسانية التي تواجههن في مجتمع سالم الابوي. يركز الباحث على ثلاث شخصيات رئيسية. تعكس اصواتهن الالتزام والمقاومة والتلاعب. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تتبنى الدراسة نهج تحليل المحتوى النوعي. وتطبق نظريتين متعلقتين بالجنس: نظرية الاختلاف لديبورا تانين (1990) ونظرية لغة المرأة لروبين لاكوف (1975). تساعد كلا النظريتان على الكشف عن كيفية استخدام النساء لأصواتهن لتأكيد هويتهن. كما توضح النظريتان كيف تتفاوض النساء على السلطة والتعامل مع القيود المفروضة عليهن في مجتمع يهيمن عليه الذكور. تظهر النتائج الرئيسية ان النساء يستخدمن اصواتهن ليس فقط لتعكس مكانتهن الاجتماعية، ولكن ايضاً كأداة قوية للتعبير عن الذات. تساهم هذه الدراسة في مجالي الجنس واللغة. وتسلط الضوء على كيفية تجسيد النص النظري للعلاقة المعقدة بين الجنس

واللغة والسلطة. وتستنتج الدراسة ان حديث النساء في مسرحية "البوتقة" يعكس صراعهن الداخلي. بما يشمل القمع والمقاومة، ويظهر كيف يستخدم الكلام للتمكين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب، صوت النساء، القمع، المقاومة، البوتقة.

## 1. Introduction

Gender is what we perform or do (Butler, 1990). It is something we accomplish and “not something we are born with or have.” Meaning that it is something we carry out in our daily lives (West, & Zimmerman, 1987). As stated by Holmes (2013), gender is an influential factor shapes individuals’ discourses. Typically, determine how men and women communicate differently. In this context, gender in language is a fundamental concept in sociolinguistics highlighting how language both reflects and reinforces societal norms about masculinity and femininity. It is understood as a social and cultural construct that is reflected in the way individuals speak, listen, and interpret meaning. Linguistic choices such as vocabulary, tone, conversational style, and even literary style are often influenced by gender expectations, which can lead to power imbalances during linguistic interaction.

Language is not just a tool for communication; it is also a mirror that reflects the social structures and cultural norms we deal with every day. Through it, individuals can express their identities, confront challenges, and conform to prevailing norms. Studying the relationship between language and gender examines the differences in communication styles between men and women, and what these differences reveal about patterns of power and social relations within society. Gendered communication plays an important role to support and challenge gender tasks, especially in environments where social hierarchies and authority are present (Holmes, 2013).

Literature still plays a pivotal role in forming how people understand gender roles. Females usually reflect or attempt to rebel against traditional stereotypes. According to Ladzekpo, Attiye, and Davi (2024), gender analysis in literature helps to reveal the social and cultural structures that perpetuate or oppose gender differences. This type of analysis is essential to understand the relationship between women, language and authority in literary texts. Gender roles are simply the social customs and traditions appointed to the members of the community based on their gender (De Vera, 2022). These norms determine which behaviors, duties, and activities are deemed suitable for males and females in a specific cultural or social frameworks.

### 1.1 Research Problem

Although previous studies have shown that women's voice often reflects gender roles and social constraints, there is a lack of detailed analysis of how traits of submission or resistance are manifested in literary texts. Therefore, the need to study the voice of female characters in selected texts, such as *The Crucible*, to understand the relationship between language, gender, and power.

- Research Question: How does women’s voice in *The Crucible* reflect gender roles imposed on them in Salem society?

### 1.2 Research Objectives

- ◆ To analyze the voice of female characters in *The Crucible*.
- ◆ To investigate the way through which gender roles formulate their speech.
- ◆ To identify the presence of resistant or submissive elements in their language.

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

This study will enhance understanding of how women's voice reflects gender roles and resistance. It will provide educators and literary critics with tools to analyze women characters accurately. In addition, it will increase awareness of gender norms in literature.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Women's Language

The relationship between language and gender has been widely explored in sociolinguistics. It is necessary to consider how socialization influences the acquisition of gender roles and expectations from childhood. Bogardus (2020), states that when studying women's language, it's not enough to look at it from a biological perspective or saying the speaker is female. The idea goes deeper than that. In gender studies, there's a distinction between "sex," which refers to biological characteristics, and "gender," which refers to the roles and expectations determined by society. Bogardus further explains that this distinction is important. It helps us understand that women's way of speaking is largely shaped by culture, upbringing. It also influenced by socialization, and experiences. This paves the way for the study of the language as a mirror of gender, and how women use it to either conform to or challenge societal expectations.

In 1975, Lakoff introduced the notion of "women's language." This language is marked by tag questions, hedges, and politeness. These characteristics reflect their marginalized position in society. She identifies two types of linguistic discrimination: how women are taught to speak and how language itself treats them. According to Lakoff, these patterns contribute to the perception of women as submissive, reducing them to roles such as "sex object" or "servant." She outlines several linguistic features that characterize "women's language," including hedges, empty adjectives, intensifiers, and particularly tag questions. These features, Lakoff claims, restrict women's ability to express authority and confidence. For instance, tag questions phrases such as

"John is here, isn't he?" are seen as more uncertain and less assertive. When use these linguistic features inappropriately, such as to seek validation for personal opinions they portray the speaker as lacking confidence. Thereby, this reinforces gendered power imbalances in communication (cited in Svendsen, 2019)

Lakoff (2004) claims that "Woman's language" means the marginal status of women in society to the important and serious considerations of life. This marginal case is evident in the way women speak, and the way women spoken about. In their speech, women avoid strong expressions and items of uncertainty is favored. They elaborate on topics that are considered trivial to the "real" world. In addition, language usually considers women as objects whose sexuality demands euphemism and their social roles are secondary and dependent on men. Consequently, women's personal identities suppressed by language which works against treatment of women, as serious persons with their own views.

Tannen, in her influential book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1990), offers a theory that explains the linguistic differences between men and women as a consequence of varied socialization modes. She introduces the notion of “genderlects”, a term blends “gender” and “dialect,” meaning that male and female speak in different dialect to the same language. It refers to distinct styles of speech used by males and females based on cultural and social gender norms. Tannen claims that language of women is primarily “language of rapport”: a way of talk to demonstrate relations, harmonies, and negotiate relationships, while men use language to affirm status, control, and independence as she referred to as “report talk,” a style usually linked to men (Ma, Rahma, Septiandri & Rangkuti, 2024), because of the difference in their communicative goals, men and women usually display different conversational behaviors. For instance, women are more likely to employ supportive feedback, indirect requests, and questions to encourage involvement in speech. On the other hand, men are more likely to utilize direct language, interrupt more frequently, and engage in competitive or information-driven talk. Tannen highlights that these patterns are not indicators of inferiority or superiority, but cultural contrasts that are often misjudge. The misinterpretation of these styles can lead to communication breakdowns and reinforce gender-based stereotypes in both personal and public contexts. Mohammed (2020) notices that there are some differences in language use between men and women, and also there are some changes through time and he believes that with the development of era, there will be less differences in the usage of language.

## 2.2 Previous Studies

Women's language has long been a topic of interest and research in the field of literature. Several academic studies have examined how women language is depicted in literary works. By shedding light on the role of language in shaping characters and indicating their social and cultural contexts. The following presents a selection of typical studies that examine recent works to analyze the form and the function of women's language in literature.

In 2021, Gagino tackled a study titled “Hysteria, Witches, and Women.” A Feminist Reading of Arthur Milleir's “The Crucible” focuses on the representation of women in the play through the lens of hysteria and emotional instability. The researcher analyzes characters like Abigail Williams as embodiment of sexual threat and chaos. He highlights how male- dominated narratives portray female characters as instigators of societal collapse. The study investigates the symbolic and thematic dimensions of female characters, yet it does not address the linguistic strategies they employ. While it sheds light on gender stereotypes, it provides an insufficient sociolinguistic analysis of how certain roles are expressed or reinforced through language. In contrast, the current study builds on this feminist perspective offering a linguistic approach to the female characters' speech. It explores how language itself becomes a site of power or submission, using the frameworks of Lakoff and Tannen to identify how gendered communication functions within the play.

In 2024, Pane, Lubis, Rangkuti and Perangin–Angin conducted a study on gendered language in Jan Austen's *Emma*. They highlight lexical choices and narrative roles mirror women's social status within a 19th- century British context. Their study shows language shape female characters identity and power in literary text. However, this study is limited to the novels and a historical context from mid-20th century America. They don't discuss how language act in dramatic conversation as well as how female speech acts under societal constraints as those seen in *The Crucible*. The current study tackles this gap. It sheds light on the linguistic features of female characters in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Although, Pan et



al.'s study applied feminist methodologies to, the current study differs by applying Lakoff's and Tannen's theories. The aim is to explore everyday language uses and dialogic interactions within a different socio-historical context. This study mphasis interactional aspects that have been neglected in previous studies.

### **3.Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

This study adopts a qualitative approach because it allows for an in-depth analysis of literary texts to understand how the language of female characters reflects gender roles, power, and resistance. It also allows to study patterns such as hesitation, submission, power, and relationship strategies within their social and cultural context. The data were analysed using a qualitative approach, with the researcher examining the characters' dialogues to extract these patterns based on the frameworks of Lakoff (1975) and Tannen (1990).

#### **3.2 Data collection**

The data of this study were collected from the original text of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in PDF format. The process involved reading the text multiple times to ensure a comprehensive understanding. This process allowed for the identification of relevant dialogue excerpts that specifically address gender roles. The selection of texts was intentional because they reflect different positions of women, whether submission, resistance, or moral balance.

#### **3.3 The Models of Analysis**

To analyze the voice of the female characters in *The Crucible*, two main theoretical frameworks will be used: Lakoff (1975), who focuses on language as a mirror of women's social position, and Tannen (1990), who explains the differences in communication styles between men and women. These two theories help explain how the language of female characters reflects submission and resistance. The two theories also clarify the relationship between language, gender, and power in the play.

##### **•Lakoff (1975)**

According to Lakoff (1975 as cited in Abbas 2010), women's language is considered deficient or weaker than men's language. It lacks authority and assertiveness, and reflects women's less social power in some positions. Lakoff explains the concept of double bind. The idea is that women are criticized for not speaking in a "feminine" manner. But if they speak in an assertive way, they are denied access to power. This framework includes a set of linguistic features that are distinctive to women:

- Women use tag questions to soften what they are say.
- Their speech can be hesitant or reserved.
- Sometimes, they talk about trivial or unimportant topics.
- They use empty adjectives and intensifiers to emphasize meaning.
- They speak politely for an attempt to maintain social acceptance.

This framework helps to look at linguistic patterns such as tag questions, intensifiers, and polite speech. It also shows the influence of gender roles on women's discourse. As well as, it identifies moments of resistance or submission in characters' speech.



## ◆ Tannen (1990)

According to Tannen (1990), women's speech style differs from men's. This not because of weakness or deficiency, but rather as a result of differences in cultural and social communication patterns.

- Women (rapport-talk): They often use language to build relationships and personal connections. they show empathy and support in their talk.
- Men (report-talk): They often focus on conveying information or demonstrating status and authority.
- This difference can sometimes lead to gender misunderstandings. Women's style is sometimes interpreted as weak, but it is simply a difference in the purpose of the speech.
- This framework helps analyze the language of the female characters in the play. It focuses on communication style differences, not just strength or weakness.
- It shows how these patterns affect relationships and the context of dialogue.

**4. Data analysis**

This section introduces an analysis of the texts and dialogues of the female characters in the play "The Crucible" and discusses them in depth. The researcher examines the dialogues of the main female characters, Mary Warren, Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Proctor. He observes that their speech style clearly reflects gender norms and power relations present in society. Language and gender theories were used to understand how their speech expresses obedience, resistance, or even manipulation. The following extracts illustrate how the discourse of female characters embodies social norms and gender roles, as will be analyzed in details.

**Extract 1**

**MARY:** " I am sick, I am sick, Mister Proctor. Pray, pray hurt me not. My insides are all shuddery; I am in the proceedings all day, sir." (Miller, n.d., Act 2)

From the above extract, Mary's speech demonstrates a balance between social submission and fear of punishment. She uses hesitation and emotion to soften her stance in front of authority, consistent with Lakoff's observations about traditional language of women. According to Tannen, it also reflects a rapport talk style of calming tension, maintaining relationships, and avoiding confrontation.

**Extract 2**

**MARY:** "I ... I cannot tell how, but I did. I heard the other girls screaming...I ... It were only sport in the beginning, sir, and then the whole world cried spirits, spirits, and I promise you..." (Miller, n.d., Act 4).

Mary's language here reflects traditional feminine features including hesitation and submission to male authority represented by the judge, as outlined by Lakoff. This is illustrated in her phrases like "I cannot tell how" and "I promise you." This is consistent with Tannen's concept "rapport talk," where women aim at calming the situation and explain their behavior rather than confrontation. As a result, Mary's language reinforces the gendered stereotype of women in repressive society of Salem.

**Extract 3**

**MARY:** "almost collapsing: Let me go, Mr. Proctor, I cannot, I cannot."  
(Miller, n.d., Act 3)

This text reflects Mary Warren's hesitation, fear of authority, and aggressive attitudes. It is consistent with Lakoff's framework of hesitation in speech, and also demonstrates the influence of social status and gender on language use according to Tannen.

#### Extract 4

**ABIGAIL:** "I want to open myself! I want the light of God; I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss His hand."  
(Miller, n.d., Act 1)

Although the language used by Abigail carries a traditional feminine tone as Lakoff describes, she skillfully uses it serving her own goals. This aligns with Tannen's view that women utilize empathetic and relational strategy as a tool of power and influence.

#### Extract 5

**ABIGAIL:** "let either of you breath a word, ... and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it."  
(Miller, n.d., Act 1)

From the above example, Abigail challenges gender norms by using sharp, authoritative language, breaking with the polite style expected of women (Lakoff). She adopts a style often attributed to men (Tannen), demonstrating that women can use language to assert power and resist social constraints.

#### Extract 6

**ABIGAIL:**

"Let you beware, Mr. Danforth. Think you to be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits? Beware of it."  
(Miller, n.d., Act 3)

**Analysis:** This quote shows that Abigail uses direct threatening language such as "beware," which is far from the style expected from women according to Lakoff (1975). This also shows that her speech is close to report talk, which is associated with strong and dominance in men (Tannen, 1990). In this way, she uses language to challenge male authority and control the situation.

#### Extract 7

**ELIZABETH:** "with great fear: I will fear nothing." (Miller, n.d., Act 3)

This text shows Elizabeth Proctor using brief, forceful language ("I will fear nothing") to assert herself despite the difficult situation (Lakoff 1975). It also reflects her cautious and courageous resistance to authority, reflecting the role of social status and gender in her actions (Tannen 1990).

#### Extract 8

**ELIZABETH:** "He have his goodness now. God, forbid I take it from him."  
(Miller, n.d., Act 4)

Elizabeth displays soft power: she respects John's decision and shows solidarity with him without direct confrontation. She uses concise, condensed language that carries a moral and emotional dimension. This is consistent with Lakoff's (1975) analysis of women's language and Tannen's (1990) analysis of women's use of language to reinforce values and relationships rather than direct confrontation

### Extract 9

**ELIZABETH:** "I cannot think the Devil may own a women's soul, Mr. Hale, when she keeps an upright way, as I have."  
(Miller, n.d., Act 2)

This discourse reveals her calm, defensive style; she uses conditional phrasing that softens the confrontation. This goes in line with Lakoff's (1975) observations that women tend to use less direct and more reserved language. At the same time, her speech focuses on her social image as a straight woman. This reflects Tannen's (1990) perspective that women use language to protect relationships and establish values rather than engage in conflict.

## 5. Results and Discussions

An analysis of the dialogues of the female characters in *The Crucible* reveals how language reflects social norms related to gender, power, and resistance in Salem's community. The theories of Lakoff (1975) and Tannen (1990) provide a framework for understanding the relationship between language and gender. The results support previous studies, such as Ladzekpo et al. (2024), which showed that language is used to express power and resistance within strict social constraints.

Mary Warren displays characteristics typical of women's language, such as hesitation, submission, and emotion, as in "I... I cannot tell how, but I did... It was only sport in the beginning..." This echoes Lakoff's observation about hesitation in women's discourse in front of male authority. It aligns with Tannen's concept of "rapport talk," which focuses on mitigating situations and maintaining relationships. In Act 3, she pleads: "Let me go, Mr. Proctor, I cannot, I cannot," reflecting her fear and submission to traditional roles. This is supported by Ladzekpo et al. (2024) who point out that women in oppressive surroundings have to make cautious decisions to avoid confrontation.

Abigail Williams challenges traditional norms with assertive and aggressive rhetoric. For example, she says "Let either of you breathe a word... and I will bring a pointy reckoning..." and "Let you beware, Mr. Danforth. Think you're so might ... may not turn your wits?" Her style demonstrates the use of power and threat to disrupt traditional politeness. In accordance with Lakoff's and Tannen's observations, her speech demonstrates language as a tool of influence. This also supports what Ladzekpo et al. (2024) stated about strong female characters who usually break traditional norms as a threat to the social order.

Elizabeth Proctor represents a more restrained and straightforward language, saying, "I will fear nothing." This reflects her inner strength while maintaining politeness and moral authority, and is consistent with Lakoff's view of concise, meaningful language. It also consistent with Tannen's view of using language to preserve relationships and values. In addition, it is consistent with Ladzekpo et al. (2024) who assert that quiet and strategic

language can be a means of resistance within strict masculine environments. This is further supported by the study of (Mukaro, Mapfunde, Mzizi & Chipika, 2025), which highlights that as language can be a means of women's oppression, it also can be a tool to women empowerment in African societies. Specifically, when utilized to challenge patriarchal ideologies. Although Lakoff (1975) notes that women use tag questions to soften the tone of conversation, no instance of them is observed in the dialogues of the three characters. This may indicate that Salem's strict context did not allow them space for soft or gentle discourse. Instead, they used other patterns such as hesitation, submission, or direct assertiveness.

The researcher analyzes three extracts for each of the female characters under study, it becomes clear how the voice of women in *The Crucible* reflects the gender roles imposed on them in the Salem community, in line with the research objectives: (1) analyzing the language of the female characters, (2) studying the impact of social and gender roles on their speech, and (3) identifying elements of resistance and submission in their language. Mary's hesitant and submissive speech reveals the influence of traditional expectations for women, while Abigail's assertive and aggressive speech challenges social constraints, and Elizabeth's balance between moral authority and relational strategy. Thus, the findings directly answer the **research question**: How do women's voice reflect the gender roles imposed on them in Salem society? They also illustrate the relationship between language, gender, and power in the play.

## 6. Conclusions

1. Language as a dual tool: It reflects the social constraints and gender roles imposed on women, while simultaneously representing a means of resistance and self-affirmation.
2. Diverse female language strategies: Female characters do not adhere to a single style, but rather range between:
  - Submission (Mary Warren)
  - Defiance and aggression (Abigail Williams)
  - Moral balance and symbolic power (Elizabeth Proctor)
3. The importance of language in understanding social relations: Language reveals the relationship between gender and power in Salem's society.
4. Literature as a social mirror: Miller's play illustrates how restrictive societies shape women's roles and influence their behavior and discourse.
5. The study highlights the role of American theater, particularly Miller's works, in portraying women's voices under patriarchal and societal pressure.
6. It emphasizes the importance of literary analysis in understanding the interplay between language, gender, and power.
7. It is recommended to conduct a comparative analysis of the voice of male and female characters to gain a deeper understanding of how gender differences are formed in literature.

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