

Investigating the Feminine Language Features in the Novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird" Based on Robin Lakoff's Model

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Received: 4/11/2022

Revised: 11/2/2024

Accepted: 11/3/2024

Published online: 2/2/2025

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Citation: Yousefabadi, A. A., yousefabadi, F. A., & Abdolazadeh, foad. (2025). Investigating the Feminine Language Features in the Novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird" Based on Robin Lakoff's Model. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 52(3), 6099. <https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v52i3.6099>



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Abstract

Objectives: This study aimed to examine the gender markers of female language in two contemporary Arabic and Persian novels. The gender markers of women's language in these novels include: frequent usage of hedges, intensifiers, polite language, approximate adjectives, woman's vocabularies, detailed illustrations and color words.

Methods: To accomplish this objective, the present article employs a descriptive-analytical methodology. Drawing on Lakoff's model, it examines the gender markers in the two novels, namely "Adore Me" by Sanaa Shalan (2013) and "My Bird" by Fariba Vafi (2002).

Results: The study's findings reveal a notable prevalence of women-specific vocabulary in both novels. Additionally, women's language in these literary works is characterized by intricate and detailed descriptions, along with a profusion of tone color. Hedges, intensifiers, and approximate adjectives are more frequently employed by the female characters in both novels. Furthermore, the avoidance of profanity and the preference for indirect requests illustrate the women's inclination towards a polite linguistic demeanor in their interactions.

Conclusions: This investigation underscores the existence of direct correlations between language and the speaker's gender in both Arabic and Persian, contributing to discernible linguistic differentiations between men and women. The outcomes of this research hold potential value for linguists seeking insights into the distinctions within the language patterns of men and women.

Keywords: feminine language, Adore Me, Sanaa Shalan, My Bird, Fariba Vafi

مؤشرات اللغة الجنسانية في روايتي «أعشقتني» و«حمامتي» وفقاً لمنهج روبن لأكوف

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه المقالة إلى دراسة مؤشرات اللغة الاجتماعية، وسمات اللغة النسوية في الخطاب الروائي المعاصر من خلال الروايتين العربية والفارسية. تتناول المؤشرات الجنسانية للغة المرأة التي تشمل سمات ثمانية، هي: استخدام القيود التشكيكية، والألفاظ المؤدبة، والقيود المشددة، والألفاظ الدالة على قوة المشاعر، والصفات الفارغة، والإحالة المباشرة، واختيار الألفاظ الخاصة بعالم المرأة، والطلب غير المباشر.

المنهجية:

تتناول هذه الدراسة معتمدة على المنهج الوصفي- التحليلي وبناء على منهج روبن لأكوف، المؤشرات الجنسانية بين روايتي «أعشقتني» للروائية سناء شعلان (أفضل رواية نسائية في الأردن عام 2013م) و«حمامتي» للروائية فريبا وفي (أفضل رواية نسائية إيرانية عام 2002م).

النتائج: أظهرت نتائج البحث أن نسبة استخدام الألفاظ الخاصة بعالم النساء في كلتا الروايتين مرتفعة. وبما أن الروايتين من إبداعات النساء فتتناولا قضايا عوالم المرأة، حيث تستخدمان عدداً غير قليل من مفردات الألوان الخاصة بالمرأة والتوصيفات الجزئية المناسبة، والأسلوب النسوي. تتمظهر الشخصيات النسوية للروايتين في خطابات تملأ بالمؤكدات، والقيود التشكيكية، والتقريبية وتمزجها بالإنشاء غيرالطلي واللغة المؤدبة.

الخلاصة: أظهر هذا البحث أن في اللغة العربية والفارسية علاقات مباشرة بين اللغة وجنس المتكلم، وهو ما يميز لغة الرجال من لغة النساء. تكون نتائج هذا البحث ذات قيمة بالنسبة للغويين الذين يبحثون عن معلومات حول الفرق بين لغة الرجال والنساء.

الكلمات الدالة: اللغة النسوية، أعشقتني، سناء شعلان، حمامتي، فريبا وفي

Introduction

The reciprocal interaction between language and social phenomena has given rise to a linguistic sub-discipline known as the sociology of language. Linguists posit a direct correlation between language and the gender of the speaker, contributing to discernible distinctions in the linguistic expressions of women and men (Albostani: 13/04/2015). Considering the numerous parallels between Arabic and Persian, stemming from the reciprocal influence of their cultures and languages (Vafi, 2004), an exploration of the literary contributions by female authors in these languages significantly contributes to the examination and comparison of the sociological aspects of both nations. This endeavor provides a unique perspective, shedding light on the axiological foundations, intercultural communications, and the comprehension of shared traits and distinctions within the subcultures encapsulated by these linguistic realms. The rationale behind this lies in the fact that women, constituting a substantial portion of the populations in Persian and Arabic-speaking societies, grapple with distinct challenges and concerns that are discerningly captured by artists and writers. Notably, novels crafted by women within these societies serve as a poignant reflection of the nuanced exploration of these thematic elements. A significant aspect distinguishing these works lies in their verbal characteristics, utilization of literary devices, as well as variations in vocabulary and certain idioms, setting them apart from other literary creations.

This study undertakes a comparative analysis of the feminine linguistic characteristics present in two novels: "Adore Me" (2012) authored by Sanaa Shalan (1970) and "My Bird" (2002). The narrative of "Adore Me" intricately weaves themes of love intertwined with philosophical concepts, as the author frequently challenges religious and traditional taboos. The protagonist embarks on diverse adventures spanning across temporal gaps in search of the truth of existence and her lost identity, ultimately seeking to experience genuine love through a connection with the divine. Along this journey, the protagonist encounters peculiar occurrences, such as the transplantation of her brain into the body of Shams, a female character who emerged as a new prophet during the current critical era and had previously passed away. The narrative conflict intensifies from this juncture, propelling her into an adventure within a world steeped in disbelief and atheism. Her quest unfolds as she seeks the truth of existence and her lost identity, reaching a point where her soul disconnects from the body and merges with the divine. "My Bird" narrates the life of a woman and her struggle with lost identity, set in the contemporary world without philosophical or mystical elements. The female protagonist faces unfortunate events, carrying childhood fears into her adulthood and enduring a confining and demeaning situation with her husband in her new life. As time unfolds, her journey involves interactions with others and self-reflection. Eventually, she discovers her true identity, adopts a fresh perspective and belief, liberates herself from the alienation within her home, and attains a sense of tranquility.

This research is imperative due to the fact that both literary works are authored by women, placing a distinct focus on women's issues. The central figures in both novels are women, embodying their respective concerns. Notably, "Adore Me" earned recognition as the foremost Jordanian women's novel in 2013, while "My Bird" was acknowledged as the premier Persian women's novel in 2002. Furthermore, both works showcase feminine discursive markers that provide researchers with insights into the minds and spirits of the authors, unveiling truths about their feminine worlds. The distinctive capabilities of these two novels, coupled with the absence of a comprehensive comparative study on the feminine writing style in the aforementioned works, have spurred the authors to undertake an analysis of gendered linguistic structures within both novels.

Method, Purpose, and Framework of the Research

The research methodology employed in this study is descriptive-analytical, aiming to unveil the gendered linguistic characteristics within the novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird" based on Robin Lakoff's theory. Robin Lakoff (born in 1942) stands as a trailblazer in the field of language and gender. Her seminal work, "Language and Women's Place" (1975), introduced the concept of "the language of woman". Lakoff posits that within every linguistic community, women possess distinct terms and exhibit specific tendencies in the application of linguistic patterns, grammatical structures, and phonetic features. These nuances manifest in various aspects, including tone of voice, word choice, pronunciation, and the manner in which speakers pose questions and respond. In accordance with Lakoff's model, the gender markers associated with

women's language consist of frequent usage of hedges, intensifiers, polite language forms, approximators, feminine words, detailed imagery, and color words.

Consequently, this study endeavors to explore the connection between the social variable of gender and the linguistic attributes found in the works of female fiction writers. The purpose is to scrutinize and compare the characteristics of gendered language within the context of these two novels. The novel "Adore Me" spans 180 pages and was initially published in 2012 AD. As of now, there is no Persian translation of this work. Similarly, "My Bird" comprises 141 pages and was first published in 2002 AD. It has not been translated into Arabic, and there is no indication of the author's proficiency in Arabic. Consequently, there is no apparent evidence of deliberate influence or interaction between these two works.

Within this study, the primary unit of analysis encompasses all feminine words and expressions found in the two aforementioned novels. Initially, these words and expressions were gathered and subsequently categorized based on the elements of Robin Lakoff's model. Their frequency was then measured utilizing data extracted from the two novels. Employing descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, a comparative analysis was conducted, and the research findings were subsequently interpreted.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does the vocabulary in the novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird" exhibit linguistic characteristics of femininity, as per the components outlined in Robin Lakoff's model of women's language?
2. How does the verbal behavior of female characters and protagonists in both novels, as analyzed through Robin Lakoff's model of women's language, relate to the cultural atmosphere prevalent in societies during the respective time periods depicted in the stories?

Review of the Related Literature

The women's movement, officially established in 1793 in France as a response to escalating prices and economic challenges, evolved over time into women's unions and associations (Rowbotham, 1993). Within this evolving context, literature served as a reflective mirror, faithfully capturing the changes and transformations of each era and conveying them to subsequent generations. Literature emerged as a potent instrument in the growth and development of the feminist movement, with many feminist principles and ideas permeating society through literary works. This influence culminated in the emergence of literary feminism as a pivotal and enduring facet of the broader feminist movement, serving as a powerful means for expressing and propagating feminist ideas.

With the integration of feminist ideas and theories into literature, the rise of feminist criticism became evident. One of its focal points is addressing women's issues, including the scrutiny of unhappy family life and the exploration of women's distinct experiences such as pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood, and the dynamics of relationships like mother-daughter or woman-woman within women's literature. Consequently, extensive studies have been undertaken in the domain of women's language. As per contemporary theories in comparative gender studies, women's gender can exert a significant influence on their linguistic expressions. These theories underscore the significance of gendered language in recent research, highlighting the variations in linguistic elements and structures based on gender. Consequently, women in literature exhibit distinct characteristics in expressing individuality, depicting their inner worlds, and navigating realms of thought, feeling, value judgment, and external perceptions. A multitude of studies have further delved into and presented insights into feminine writing.

Nemati (2003) initially provided a concise overview of the historical trajectory of research on linguistic disparities between women and men within the sociology of language. Subsequently, the author outlined the factors influencing such distinctions and elaborated on Lakoff's viewpoint in this context. Additionally, he/she addressed the rationale behind the observation that women's language tends to be more polite compared to that of men.

In their exploration of women's poetry, feminine style, and dialect, Gholami and Bakhshizadeh (2013) have concluded

that the feminine style, encompassing feminine writing and dialect, constitutes a self-aware movement. This movement aims to empower women to liberate themselves from the dominance of the male-centered intellectual and linguistic structures prevalent in society. It advocates for women to express themselves, narrate their desires, hopes, and dreams, actively contributing as equal members of human society. The movement endeavors to discern disparities between feminine language or writing style and the male-dominated and normative language of society by comparing literary works produced by women and men. They meticulously discerned and elucidated the distinctive markers present in the poetry of Iranian women poets. Through a comprehensive examination of their literary contributions, the scholars identified elements that set apart women's poetry from that of men, imbuing these works with a discernible inclination toward a feminine writing style. They asserted that future research endeavors may further unveil writings imbued with feminine expressions, allowing for the explication of syntactic and descriptive attributes inherent in women's texts.

Mahmudi Bakhtiyari and Dehghani (2013) conducted an examination of the correlation between language and gender in contemporary Persian novels. Their investigation, centered on six carefully chosen novels, revealed substantial differences in writing styles between women and men within the context of contemporary Iranian literature. Drawing from Lakoff's framework, the authors highlighted distinctions in the use of linguistic elements by women and men, encompassing precise color vocabulary, polite expressions, intensifying adverbs, empty adjectives, indirect speech, avoidance of vulgarity and taboo language, and the emphasis on intensifiers. Through a statistical analysis of these linguistic features within the selected works, they demonstrated the consistent alignment of Persian-speaking women writers with Lakoff's perspectives, particularly in the areas of color word usage, hedges, taboo language avoidance, intensifiers, and the diversity of adjectives. Nikoubakht, Dasp, Bozorg-Bigdeli, and Monshi-Zadeh (2012), employing an examination of Zoya Pirzad's literary works and an analysis grounded in feminist stylistics, have drawn conclusions regarding the transformative impact Pirzad has exerted on the portrayal of female characters in comparison to preceding eras, consequently reshaping perspectives on women. Spanning from her inaugural work, the short story collection "Like All Seasons," to the novel "We Get Used to It," Pirzad's oeuvre exhibits the manifestation of feminine viewpoints across various layers of the text, including vocabulary, sentence structures, and discourse. The evolution of thought within Pirzad's works gives rise to a corresponding evolution in language. In the short story collections "Like All Seasons," "The Taste of Unripe Almonds," and "One Day Before Eid," women are depicted as ensnared in the routine of daily life, lacking autonomy. However, in the novel "I Turn the Lights Off," Pirzad scrutinizes the position of women, and in the novel "We Get Used to It," the transformation of women's roles into agency and social engagement introduces a distinct portrayal of feminine identity in an active and empowered role.

Research also has delved into this subject in the Arabic context, with some noteworthy studies outlined below:

Brahimi and Nahilia (2021) posit that the focal theme of Arabic women's novels revolves around issues unique to women. Arab female writers perceive the novel as an optimal medium for articulating their innermost thoughts, experiences of solitude, and the challenges they endure. The central protagonist in these novels is often a woman grappling with fears and loneliness. Despite an initial portrayal as timid and conservative, she undergoes a transformation, emerging as a courageous individual by the narrative's conclusion. This perspective has given rise to a novel genre recognized in Arab countries as the women's novel.

According to Malvani (2017), Fadhila El Farouk adeptly captures the essence of femininity through the female characters in her short story collection "Stealing Love." Farouk employs diverse linguistic strategies in both structure and content, influenced by feminine characteristics, emotions, and perspectives. These aspects can be dissected at three distinct levels: vocabulary, sentence construction, and overall discourse.

In light of the aforementioned context, it is valid to assert that, to date, no comparative study has scrutinized the gender markers within the two novels, "Adore Me" and "My Bird." This paper stands as the inaugural research endeavor to examine these works from a gender-centric perspective.

Discussion

The complexity of linguistic disparities between women and men hinges on a multitude of factors, encompassing

culture, education, individual experiences, and social conditions. Robin Lakoff's (1975) language and gender model stands out as one of the most comprehensive resources delving into this intricate subject.

"Language and Women's Place" is a book written by Robin Lakoff, a linguist and professor at the University of California, Berkeley. The book was published in 1975 and is considered a groundbreaking work in the field of sociolinguistics.

In "Language and Women's Place," Lakoff explores the relationship between language and gender, specifically focusing on how language use reflects and reinforces gender inequality in society. She argues that language plays a crucial role in shaping and maintaining gender roles and stereotypes.

She examines how women's language is often characterized as more polite, hesitant, and deferential, while men's language is associated with assertiveness, authority, and dominance. Lakoff also explores the use of qualifiers, hedges, and tag questions by women as linguistic strategies to mitigate potential confrontations and maintain social harmony.

The book sparked significant debate and influenced subsequent research on gender and language. Lakoff's work brought attention to the ways in which language can both reflect and perpetuate social inequalities and power imbalances between genders.

In the subsequent sections, we will explore the gender-specific markers that influence the writing styles of Arabic and Persian novels, drawing from Lakoff's perspective. Each component will be discussed individually, accompanied by examples from these literary works.

Woman's Vocabulary

Differences in vocabulary usage between women and men are observable. Certain words or phrases may be more prevalent among one gender or limited to a specific group. Moreover, women and men might employ distinct terms to convey identical concepts or emotions. Given that both novels feature female authors delving into women's experiences, the prevalence of vocabulary specific to women is notably higher compared to other gender markers. The elevated frequency observed here signifies the authors' ability to offer a nuanced yet distinctly feminine viewpoint. They skillfully construct a palpable, authentic world, drawing upon life's text and their own feminine encounters to extract a vocabulary that resonates with the feminine essence in their novels. In the case of the novel "Adore Me", the use of feminine vocabulary predominantly delves into the spiritual and emotional dimensions of women, a reflection of the central themes of love and philosophical concepts. The female protagonist, Khorshid, recurrently shares maternal experiences such as conversing with the fetus and expressing concerns during pregnancy, providing the reader with a profound connection to her journey through impending motherhood. Notably, within this fictional novel, the male protagonist, Bassel al-Mehri, undergoes a unique pregnancy in the imaginative realm of the narrative. Intriguingly, the sections dedicated to this extraordinary event are replete with vocabulary typically associated with women. Expressions such as «عميات تجميل» (getting dressed up), «ورم الحمل» (swelling after pregnancy), «بطني يتدلى» (my stomach would drop into my lap because of the pregnancy), «الإجهاض» (maternity clothes), «الإنجاب» (childbirth), «الجنين» (fetus) (Shalan, 2015) imbue the text with a distinct feminine undertone.

Within the pages of the novel "My Bird," the feminine lexicon is intricately woven into depictions of both the physical and biological attributes of women, as well as their engagements in social and familial pursuits. These narrative segments feature the deliberate incorporation of specific terms associated with the female physique, including menopause, caesarean section, natural childbirth, and elements like makeup and cosmetics (Vafi, 2012). This intentional selection of vocabulary imparts a distinctly feminine hue and fragrance to the storyline.

Accurate and Detailed Descriptions

Lakoff posits that women, in their speech, tend to convey comprehensive and precise descriptions, a trait more prevalent among women compared to men (Lakoff, 1975). This propensity can be attributed to the nurturing and delicate nature associated with women, particularly as mothers, fostering heightened precision and meticulousness. Consequently, within the discussed novels, detailed descriptions predominantly emanate from female characters, with the narrator exhibiting keen attention to the appearance and conduct of these characters. While it is essential to avoid broad generalizations,

acknowledging the existence of imprecise and coarse female characters and meticulous men, the focus here is on the prevailing trend. The recurrent occurrence of detailed descriptions in both novels establishes this characteristic as a prominent stylistic and linguistic attribute. In the novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird," detailed imagery abounds, with 931 and 1132 instances respectively, underscoring the substantial attention to visual detail. For example, in "Adore Me", the narrator's precision is evident in the depiction of the reporter, who is portrayed with transparent turquoise glasses. The narrative meticulously captures the nuances of her appearance and movements, akin to a vigilant video camera recording every detail (Shalan, 2015).

Within a segment of the novel "My Bird," the narrator presents Shahlā through the lens of a female character, remarking, "Shahlā possesses a plump figure complemented by a remarkably beautiful nose. Her hazel eyes, both round and vibrant, draw attention, with her double chin emerging as the focal point of one's gaze" (Vafi, 2012). This portrayal serves as an illustrative instance of the detailed feminine perspective concerning individuals' appearances, particularly when it comes to evaluating other women. Such scrutiny is often more pronounced among women in society, influenced by societal expectations surrounding the physical beauty of women.

Intensifiers

Lakoff contends that language is intricately linked to individuals' social status, with speech patterns adapting based on one's level of power. Indeed, power dynamics fluctuate due to various factors such as gender, age, and the social standing of the speaker. Across history, women's language has been shaped by their historically lower social status. In many societies, women, facing limitations in accessing positions of power, employ specific linguistic strategies to affirm and navigate their status within the societal hierarchy through their speech. According to Lakoff, one of the techniques involves enhancing sentence emphasis through the use of intensifiers like "only," "more," "definitely," "really," "very," "truly," "100 percent," etc. (Lakoff, 1975). Consequently, women tend to employ intensifiers unnecessarily, aiming to impart significance and bolster the semantic weight of their speech. In the novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird," intensifiers make appearances 614 and 590 times, respectively. To illustrate this, citing one example from each novel where a female character utilizes an intensifier will suffice: "Adore Me": «أنتِ تحبُّها بكلِّ تأكيد» (You definitely love her) (Shalan, 2015). "My Bird": «كانت شهلا أكبر» «سنأ وأشدَّ طفولة» (Shahla was older and more childlike) (Vafi, 2012). In both instances, the inclusion of an intensifier in the female narrator's dialogue serves to underscore and emphasize their expressions.

The Polite Language

The norms of polite verbal communication are shaped by the values and beliefs inherent in each society. Various sociolinguistic theories have been proposed to elucidate the conditions and structures governing polite language, with some emphasizing the influence of the speaker's gender (Alsousi, 2017). Lakoff, for instance, posits that societal context and cultural upbringing contribute to women employing a more polite linguistic style. She contends that, owing to societal expectations, women tend to have an innate inclination toward using polite language, leading them to avoid the use of swear words and taboo expressions in their everyday speech as much as possible (Lakoff, 1975). While exceptions undoubtedly exist, the crucial focus lies on the examination of the statistical majority. The prevailing trend in both novels highlights that women predominantly exhibit non-abusive speech, often internalizing and suppressing their anger in instances of fury, thereby steering clear of verbal and physical violence, particularly when interacting with men. Based on these statistical patterns, one can infer that, overall, the speech of women in both novels tends to be more courteous compared to that of men.

Lakoff posits that the degree of indirect expression employed in a conversation correlates with the level of politeness in that discourse. According to Lakoff's perspective, expression strategies can be broadly categorized into two classifications: direct and indirect. In the direct expression strategy, the speaker articulates their request explicitly and without ambiguity to the listener. Conversely, in the indirect strategy, the speaker, constrained by the social distance between themselves and the listener, conveys their intent indirectly and with a degree of ambiguity (Lakoff, 1975).

Lakoff asserts that in everyday interactions between women and men, there is widespread utilization of indirect expression. This tendency arises due to the social distance between genders, prompting requests to shift from a direct imperative structure to a more indirect form. Such a communication strategy contributes to enhancing the overall politeness of speech (Lakoff, 1975). In light of this observation, another notable manifestation of verbal politeness evident in women's language within these novels is their predominant use of indirect forms in making requests. Across both novels, the majority of female characters opt to present their requests as record, indirect order, or indirect questions when addressing others.

In the novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird," these polite request structures appear frequently in dialogue, occurring 498 times and 541 times, respectively. To illustrate this point, an example of indirect requests in women's speech from each novel is presented: in the novel "Adore Me," the female character, when desiring to share a meal with another woman, employs a polite linguistic approach. Rather than stating a direct "I want to eat" or "Make food for me," she chooses a more courteous expression, saying, «إن سمحت لي بالأكل» (If you would allow me to eat) (Shalan, 2015).

Similarly, in "My Bird," the female character, rather than explicitly expressing the wish to go back or saying "Take me back to the previous place," employs an indirect request, inquiring, «ألا يجب أن أعود من هنا؟» (Shouldn't I return from here?) (Vafi, 2012).

Hedges

Hedging pertains to expressions indicating the speaker's uncertainty or doubt regarding the accuracy of information (Al-Abd, 2017: 92). For instance, when individuals receive news about the demise of a prominent figure from unreliable sources, they may incorporate phrases like "it seems" or "probably" when conveying this information to others. Lakoff posits that the frequency of employing such phrases varies based on the gender of the speaker, with women utilizing hedging more frequently than men (Lakoff, 1975). According to Lakoff, this heightened use of hedging by women stems from their lower self-confidence and the uncertainty associated with their subordinate position in society. Women are more inclined to be cautious about avoiding errors and criticism (Lakoff, 1975). In the novels "I Love Me" and "My Bird," instances of hedging are observed 312 and 406 times, respectively. Based on the preceding discussion, it is justifiable to assert that the prevalence of this linguistic feature among most female characters in both novels can be attributed to their precarious position in a patriarchal society. Consider the following example from "Adore Me" novel: «يُمْكِنُ أَنْ يَتَحَوَّلَ وَعْيُهُ» (she probably lost her consciousness) (Shalan, 2015). In this section, the female characters refrain from making unequivocal statements and instead incorporate hedges, signaling their doubt and uncertainty about the awareness of the individuals they are addressing. This hesitant speech serves as an indication of the speaker's cautious approach, aiming to avoid making absolute statements and allowing them to preemptively address the potential for criticism from their audience when necessary.

In "My Bird," the female character exercises discretion in her expression, employing the hedges "perhaps" and "maybe" to carefully articulate her perspective: «ربما كانت قد عاشت بالفعل طفولته مع عمته محبوب» (Perhaps she had already lived her childhood with her beloved aunt) (Vafi, 2012). This is particularly pronounced in the Persian novel, portraying a patriarchal society. The female character, having experienced rigidity in her father's household and carrying remnants of childhood fears into adulthood, further endures discrimination, bullying, and humiliation in her husband's residence. Living akin to a prisoner, she faces reprimand and punishment for her perceived powerlessness or minor errors. Consequently, her self-confidence has diminished, fostering false and negative beliefs about her capabilities and perception of her environment. Naturally, a woman of this nature would exercise caution in various aspects, including the expression of her own opinions.

Approximate Adjectives

Approximators are linguistic qualifiers like "approximately," "roughly," and "to some extent," conveying the notion of approximation and delineating the boundaries of a given concept (Nasr, 2009: 215). Lakoff posits that women employ these qualifiers more frequently than men, attributing this tendency to the social dynamics wherein women, often influenced by their societal standing, tend to refrain from delivering responses with absolute decisiveness (Lakoff, 1975).

A considerable portion of the behaviors and responses exhibited by the female characters and heroines in both novels

originates from the cultural milieu prevalent in male-dominated societies. Within such societies, women occupy a subordinate position, marked by a lower social status compared to men. This societal structure, coupled with established beliefs and expectations regarding women, prompts them to adopt a more cautious approach to their speech, even in situations that ostensibly warrant parity with men. Utilizing approximators enables women to sidestep absolute assertions in their expressions. While exceptions exist, this paper engages in broad assessments based on statistical findings. The substantial frequency of these approximators in the dialogue of women in both novels serves as substantiation for this assertion. In the novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird," approximators were employed 411 and 218 times, respectively. The ensuing quotes exemplify instances of approximator usage in the novels under consideration:

"Adore Me": «أعرف من هي الأقل» (At least I know who she is) (Shalan, 2015).

"My Bird": «في بعض الأحيان كانت يحتاج إلى طفل في حياتها» (Sometimes she needed a child in her life) (Vafi, 1391).

Tone Color

Women demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to discerning colors compared to men, meticulously considering various shades within each hue (Lakoff, 1975). Consequently, a discernible distinction between women's and men's writing emerges, particularly in the utilization of color (Nikobakht et al.: 123). Male writers tend to predominantly employ primary colors, while women exhibit a greater attention to detail in color naming (Mahmoudi Bakhtiari & Dehghani, 2013: 547). The infusion of 192 color words in the novel "Adore Me" and the recurrent use of color, totaling 74 instances in the novel "My Bird," imparts a distinctly feminine undertone to these literary works. The subsequent excerpts highlight instances of color usage in both novels:

From the novel "Adore Me": «جسّ في سريري المفعم ببياض باهت» (I sat on my bed full of pale whiteness) (Shalan, 2015).

In the novel "My Bird": «سأشتري قبعة ليمون للأطفال» (I will buy a lemon hat for the kids) (Vafi, 2012).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of gender markers in the novels "I Love Me" and "My Bird," the following results have been derived:

Table 1: Gender Markers in the Novels "Adore Me" and "My Bird"

		Woman's Vocabulary	Detailed Descriptions	Intensifiers	The Polite Language	Hedges	Approximate Adjectives	Tone Color	Total
Adore Me	<i>Frequency</i>	2726	931	614	498	411	312	192	5684
	<i>Percentage</i>	48%	16%	11%	9%	7%	6%	3%	100%
My Bird	<i>Frequency</i>	2110	1132	592	541	406	218	74	5071
	<i>Percentage</i>	42%	22%	12%	11%	8%	4%	1%	100%

"Adore Me," comprising 23,622 words, incorporates 5,684 feminine linguistic features, constituting approximately 23% of the total word count. Similarly, in the case of "My Bird," a novel spanning 19,427 words, 5,071 feminine linguistic features are identified, accounting for approximately 26% of the total words. Notably, the preponderance of feminine words emerges as the most frequent linguistic feature in both novels. This prevalence can be attributed to the fact that both works are authored by women delving into the portrayal of women's lives, thereby contributing to a higher frequency of women-specific language usage. Furthermore, the female characters in both novels, grappling with low self-confidence and navigating the uncertainties arising from their subordinate status in patriarchal Iranian and Arab societies, exhibit a propensity for more polite language, intensified expressions, and hedges in their discourse. In both novels, the utilization of color words emerges with the lowest frequency. In "Adore Me," nearly a quarter of the total words exhibit feminine linguistic features. Interestingly, while elements of the Persian language are not inherently gendered, the language employed by women constitutes over a quarter of the total words in "My Bird," suggesting a distinctly feminine voice. Thus, the examination of gender markers in these two novels underscores the existence of direct correlations between language and

the speaker's gender in both Arabic and Persian, leading to discernible differentiations between the language patterns of women and men.

Furthermore, the comprehensive statistical analysis pertaining to the language employed in both novels indicates that, despite the divergent subject matter, there exists no discrepancy in the utilization of gender markers. Notably, both authors exhibit the same frequency hierarchy. This not only underscores the feminine narrative prevalent in both novels but also sheds light on the subordinate status of women within Arabic-speaking and Persian-speaking societies. This revelation underscores that a considerable portion of the linguistic disparities between women and men originates from the prevailing inequality in their social standings, often molded within specific societal constraints.

The insights garnered from this study hold potential significance for linguists seeking information on the differentiation between the language patterns of women and men in both Arabic and Persian contexts.

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