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Mekwanent Tilahun Desta

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RECKONING THE MALE-FEMALE SOCIAL STATUS IN LITERATURE

Mekwanent Tilahun Desta

Lecturer, College of Social Sciences and Languages, Mekelle University

(ETHIOPIA)

Mokambo1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article discusses how dialogue analysis can serve as a way forward to scrutinize the positions females and males are given in their social milieu respectively as depicted by creators of literary products. Studying the portrayal of males and females in a certain literary piece can encompass the distinctive linguistic presentation, and a particular way of perceiving and making sense of the world. The analytical presentation of the societal position males and females hold is presented in light of characters' dialogues. To do this, speech act theory, turn taking and topic control, politeness phenomena, maxims analysis, and some other discourse analysis techniques were used as tool to dissect the meaning each character's dialogue bears and its entailment as social status (dominance) indicator. Accordingly, male dominated social interaction prevailed in Wole Soyinka's play entitled "The Lion and The Jewel". What provoked the researcher to deal with such a study is for one thing, the position females hold in their society as compared to their male counterparts is analyzed from literary (mainly, feminist) criticism point of view. This study is hoped to enhance other perspectives from which literary products can be seen afresh. Therefore, this article will give rise to an investigation of literary products from different angles in addition to overridden schemes of analysis. Considering this, the societal position males and females hold as reflected through their speeches has been scrutinized to reveal their depiction in the play understudy. The finding of the study shows that, females held an inferior position as compared to their male counterparts. A literary material whether intentionally or unintentionally given a particular way of presentation of the story and representation of the world, it needs to be approached from different angles that would hint at some alcoves that have never been reached.

Key Words: Speech Act, Turn Taking, Pragmatics, Social status, Discourse, Politeness phenomena, literary products, Play, Wole Soyinka

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings used a wide range of communication techniques since Stone Age. This is because they needed to get something done. With the advent of science and technology, human beings continued to transform the way they interact and perform numerous tasks. It is apparent that when a conversation takes place, one of the conversers dominates the theme of the conversation in order to get their wish fulfilled. If this is the veracity behind some dialogues, analysis of the features that lay fertile foundation for the eminence of underlying discourse elements is very significant.

Rabinow (1984) states that 'Discourse' is a term associated most closely with Michel Foucault; it refers to the way meaning is formed, expressed and controlled in a culture through its language use. Every culture has particular ways of speaking about experience and conceptualizing experience, and rules for what can and what cannot be said and for how talk is controlled and organized. It is through discourse that we constitute our experience, and an analysis of discourse can reveal how we see the world.

As language is the base symbol system through which culture is created and maintained, it can be said that discourse embodies our daily experience. That is, we only register as being what we attach meaning to, we attach meaning through language, and meaning through language is controlled by the discursive structures of a culture. Rabinow (1984) further asserts that there is no outside-of-the text; our experience is constructed by our way of talking about experience, and thus is itself a cultural and linguistic construct.

As well, Gee (2005), says that people build identities and activities not just through language but by using language together with other "stuff" that is not language. One has to be competent enough in the discourse he or she

is assigned to act accordingly, however, there is difference between one's genuine mental deportment and physical stipulation and this is merely to show how human discourse is essential in manifesting the sociolinguistics and other stuffs together to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity.

The term "Discourse" with "D," stands for ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking and believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity. Thinking about the different Discourses a piece of language is part of is another tool for engaging in discourse analysis (Gee 2005, p. 21).

Above and beyond, critical discourse analysis highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relationship in contemporary societies. This is partly the matter of how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse. It is fruitful to look at both 'power in discourse' and 'power over discourse' in these dynamic terms' (Wodak, 1996).

According to Johnstone (2001), in linguistics and humanities, narrative was one of the first discourse genres to be analyzed, and it has continued to be among the most intensively studied of the things people do with talk. Furthermore, it was elaborated that narrative has been one of the major themes in humanistic and social scientific thought since the mid-twentieth century. The essence of humanness, long characterized as the tendency to make sense of the world through rationality, has come increasingly to be described as the tendency to tell stories, to make sense of the world through narrative. Similarly, pragmatics and speech acts are part of the human discourse that gives rise to understanding. Hence, approaching literary products using pragmatics and speech acts to unravel the way members of a certain society are represented in relation to the social position they hold is imperative.

Various scholars in various contexts have raised a number of concerns across disciplines. From the main points that grabbed attention, the representation of women in different arenas is one of the melting pots of discourses on equity and equality. For example, Rolz (2012) indicates that a female character, Marie, in Anna Seghers's *Transit*, was portrayed in a very negative light whereby she was portrayed as selfish, a user, and not exactly a positive figure. Besides, Gebreyesus (2008) argues that misogyny or gender discrimination is not only employed in traditional cultures, but also in the brains of grand thinkers and stimulants of the world in written works like creative writing and nonfiction, syntax of language, oral literatures. Among great thinkers, Aristotle and Hegel are assumed misogynist. Aristotle has written that, women were inferior to men. Besides, Anderson (2010) argues that chauvinism, and repressive forms of spiritual practice are still deeply entrenched in world religions. Therefore, the current study is based on a belief that specific meaning of a literary product would be impossible without paying due consideration to the dialogue of characters in order to influx into the heart of the relationship between characters and their status in that particular scenario.

Searle (1979) and Short (1996), say that it is possible to make a conjecture of behavior within a given literary piece. Every communicative aspect of human being is thence portrayed in the fictional representation of the real world regardless of the genres. These genres of literature range from oral accounts to literary compositions however, literary forms vary in their features and ways of presentation. In Austin (1962) terminology, the author pretends to perform illocutionary acts by way of actually performing phonetic and phatic acts. The utterance acts in fiction are indistinguishable from the utterance acts of serious discourse, and it is for that reason that there is no textual property that will identify a stretch of discourse as a work of fiction. It is the performance of the utterance act with the intention of invoking the horizontal conventions that constitutes the pretended performance of the illocutionary act.

Some playwrights are watchful to real conversation while they are writing plays. However, others use their own style. For example, Harold Pinter, a playwright gives focus on how people talk. On the other hand, George Bernard Shaw, playwright, is considered stilted in his creating talks among characters. He displays more realistic illusion than conversational realism. This tends to show how believable plots and characters are Short (1996, P.181).

Close scrutiny of a literary work using speech acts and pragmatics in literary communication provides ample opportunity for researchers to go deeper into the portrayal of the characters as postulated in their social milieu. In the mean while, it is believed that plays portraying societal interactions and mind makeup go beyond hinting at only linguistic features but also sociological and anthropological inputs. The current research is anchored on play which takes inter-character dialogue as the very essence of its existence as many other plays and literary products do. Performance is, especially, the niche of a play. It presents a lifelike experience which shows the reality a certain

playwright wants to depict. Consequently, the current study is geared towards analysis of one of Soyinka's famous plays, "The Lion and The Jewel". It mainly focuses on the position females hold as compared to their male counterparts.

2. METHODOLOGY

Analyses of dramatic conversation render a vista of perspectives into the setting, culture, worldview and a multitude of humanistic elements. This is done through a methodical analysis that maintains the nuance of any attempt to represent a certain group of people through literary products. Therefore, it is vital to carefully choose extracts and support them by essential theoretical and practical principles that justify any claim made. Thus, the analysis of this play revolves around the male-female social status as embedded in their discourse. To achieve this, Speech act theory, pragmatics, politeness phenomena, and Principles of cooperation (maxims) are adopted as tools for analysis of the selected discourse. Thence, in the following analysis, all conversational behavior are seen indiscriminately for a reason that there are overlaps of familiarized speech act classifications, maxims analysis and many others that are found to be fitting within each extract taken from the play under study. Special attention is offered to the most important dialogues that constitute tenable linguistic elements that show male-female social position. The research depended on dialogue analysis. In order to create a vivid image of the play's societal scenario, different sections of the extracts from the play are rendered along with the theoretical frame works that justify the claims made.

3. DISCUSSION

It is known that in many traditional African cultures the relationship between men and women is of the master and slave relationship. It has to be noted that there are also indigenous institutions that treat women and men equally. Several approaches could be put in effect in order to examine the position men and women hold in their societies. Therefore, this analysis is not postulated towards critical theories such as Feminist, Marxist or any other established theories. This study is based on the dynamics of speech acts theory and pragmatics as indicators of the societal position women and men hold in their societies. This position in literary texts and many other social discourses can easily be detected using speech act theory and pragmatics as tools for analysis.

Lakunle: [looks, and gets suddenly agitated.] And look at that! [Makes a general siveep in the direction of her breasts.]Who was it talked of shame just now? How often must Itell you, Sidi, that a grown up girl must cover up... Her...shoulders? I can see quite...quite a good portion of –that! And so I imagine can every man in the village.Idlers all of them, Good-for-nothing shameless men casting their lustful eyes where theyhave no business... (Soyinka, 1963, P. 2-3)

In the above quotation, we can at times find important speech act and pragmatic features that can potentially indicate the presupposition held by Lakunle, his hesitation pause ... *must cover up... Her...shoulders? I can see quite...quite...*, and the power hierarchy between both interlocutors as inputs to notice the characters' social position. And indeed, it is also possible to investigate how he mulls over the other people, the ones whom he calls good-for-nothing, idlers. This shows us his schemata or how he perceives the world. Moreover, in the above extract, Lakunle's dominance over Sidi is clearly seen that he took longer time to utter without having her breathe a single word. Hence, the power balance is inclined towards Lakunle.

Therefore, in here it is possible to examine this conversation from Short (1996) concept of turn taking which draws attention to the existence of clear connections with conversational power. Short (1996) argues that however everything is understood between two partakers in a conversation by the principle of cooperation, powerful speakers in conversations have the longest turns, have most turns, control what is talked about, who talks when, and interrupt others. Thus, in the course of their talk Lakunle enforces topics, indirectly threatens, and talks for longer time than Sidi does. In the mean while, after a brief exchange of ideas, Sidi's talk prompts us to closely approach how she uses speech act with the concept of directness and indirectness. Subsequently, it is important to first take Sidi's words as presented in the following extract.

Sidi: This is too much. Is it you, LAKUNLE, telling me that I make myself common talk? When the whole world knows of the mad man of Ilujinle, who calls himself a teacher! Is it SIDI who makes the men choke in their cups, or you, with your big loud words and no meaning? You and your ragged books dragging your feet to every threshold and rushing them out again as curses greet you instead of welcome. Is it Sidi they call a fool--even the children--or you with your fine airs and little sense! (Soyinka, 1963 P. 3)

In the above extract we can first identify that Sidi is outraged by what Lakunle said. Because in this extract every word she used indicates how mad she is at him. The most important thing in here is not to scrutinize whether she is happy or not rather what features of language exist in her dialogue; in fact how Sidi uses the language tells us that she never cared about the face want of Lakunle. As cited in Simpson (1997: P157), based on Brown and Levinson's taxonomy, Sidi's language use can be described as unmitigated, direct strategy as having been performed baldly, without redress. With the bald, non-redressive strategy the function of the utterance is clear, unambiguous and concise. In line with this, with regard to Grice's maxims, Sidi's language is clear and straight forward that it did not address Lakunle indirectly. For the reason that all sort of language use, insulting, reprimanding, mocking and sneering are used directly without any facesaving act or redressive strategy; it is possible to say that Sidi's speech act is presented in a way that portrays the relationship between her and Lakunle as dominator and dominated respectively. Therefore, based on this dialogue we can conclude that Sidi, who is a female village 'Bale' is given a better social status in her society as she never retreated from telling Lakunle what she wanted to.

By the same token, we can investigate the chain of command. Short (1996) articulates that from the way characters address one another in fictional conversation, we can identify their role within the given dialogue. Despite the fact that the ways of addressing bosses or subordinates are explicit to see the relationship and role they have in a conversation or their contribution to the issue at hand, in the case of this play, it is also possible to see the dominance of the characters reversed from the role that we expect from teacher-student or man-woman relationship in which Sidi breaches and reverses the power hierarchy. Because she is not behaving in a way that African women traditionally treat their male counterparts. In addition to this analysis, it is possible to look at the various aspects of man-woman relationship using speech acts and pragmatics as tools.

[Lakunle enters unobserved.]

Lakunle: The full moon is not yet, but the women cannot wait. They must go mad without it. [The dancing stops. Sadiku frowns.]

Sadiku: The scarecrow is here. Begone fop! This is the world of women. At this moment our star sits in the center of the sky. We are supreme. What is more, we are about to perform a ritual. If you remain, we will chop you up; we will make you the sacrifice.

Lakunle: What is the hag gibbering?

Sadiku: [advances menacingly.] You less than man, you less than littlest woman, I say begone.

Lakunle: [nettled] I will have you know that I am a man as you will find out if you dare to lay a hand on me. (Soyinka, 1963, P. 34)

In the above extract, we can see expressions like '*We are supreme, hag gibbering, less than man, less than littlest woman, will have you know that I am a man...*' that indicate the inferior position the women held as depicted in the dialogues of the above characters. As Lakunle enters, Sadiku begins abusing him though gradually Lakunle maintains the dominance as manifested in their dialogues. To explore the embedded meanings of the dialogues that demean women, utterances performed by Sadiku and Lakunle himself clearly reveal that women are inferior to men for example as in *hag gibbering, less than man, less than littlest woman, will have you know that I am a man...* It is also possible to look at the other aspects of the above excerpt by considering politeness phenomena and speech act classification. To be precise, Sadiku is using a declarative speech act and such speech acts are unique form of speech acts. In that their successful performance depends upon the status of the speaker and the precise circumstances surrounding the event. In fact, Sadiku has this role as far as the compound belongs to Barokawho is her husband and the chief of Ilujinle. In the other sense this speech act can also be regarded as a directive speech act that Sadiku tells Lakunle again and again to get lost from there; accordingly, in such a context, it also has an element of directive speech act. People use directive speech acts when they are in a certain position to direct their interlocutor. Nevertheless, the final speech act performance of Lakunle shows us that classifications of speech acts doesn't necessarily show us that one is superior and the other is inferior.

In addition, it is also possible to examine the politeness phenomena. In the fundamental nature of the above conversation, we see no way of addressing one another politely, instead, every utterance is accompanied by threatening act. Subsequently, based on Lakunle-Sadiku's means of addressing each other we can conclude that the utterance that Sadiku uses in the above quoted example is bald speech without redressive. When such differences come according to the cultural background given in the text, it is doable to talk about the cultural and social relationship and status in literary materials. Furthermore, it is also viable to see the contents of all speech acts used in the above quote. When seen in a correlative aspect, Lakunle uses bald and direct language that is full of slurs and demeaning contents that clearly indicate his sense of superiority. Both partakers in the conversation use language which shows rough relationship and disrespect to each other. Sadiku compares Lakunle with that of a scarecrow and a man who is less than a woman. An important point here is a phrase, less than a woman which is used by Sadiku. It

shows that Sadiku herself believes that women are inferior to men because she used that expression to insult Lakunle. In connection to Sadiku's understanding of a woman, we can still say that women themselves accept the inferior position given to them by a particular patriarchal society. Likewise, Lakunle himself uses obnoxious expressions such as *hag gibbering* and other odious expressions. As a result, it is possible to interpret this extract as a sort of dialogue that shows the attitude of the participants towards women.

Sidi: A good day to the head and people of this house. [Baroka lifts his head, frowns as if he is trying to place a voice.] A good day to the head and the people of this house.[Baroka decides to ignore and concentrates on the contest.]

Baroka: [without looking up.] Is Sadiku not at home then?

Sidi: [absent-mindedly.] Hm?

Baroka: I asked, is Sadiku not at home?

Sidi: [recollecting herself, she curtsys quickly.] I saw no one, Baroka.

Baroka: No one? Do you mean there was no one to bar unwanted strangers from my privacy?

Sidi: [retreating.] The house...seemed...empty. (Soyinka, 1963, P. 38)

In the above citation, we have abundant elements to be treated meticulously. One of the plentiful elements is the concept of 'self and other say nothing'. In here, when Sidi comes and salutes Baroka, he ignores her as if he didn't hear what she said. And this can be paired with the concept of face threatening act and cooperative principle. To start with the notion of self and other say nothing, we observe Baroka avoiding Sidi by saying nothing and in the mean time we can say that Baroka's face threatening act is negative and threatening that caused Sidi to panic. Coming to the view of cooperation, we find the aspect of maxim flouting; All the same, it is essential to analyze where maxims are breached and the type of maxims breached by the partakers of the conversation. Hence, it is Baroka who flouts maxim in the above extract. Particularly, the maxim of relation in which, where Sidi salutes him, he asks about the presence of Sadiku and that question has a hidden meaning that he did not want to talk to Sidi at that particular time. Yet, one can see how Sidi reacts to the offensive expression '*No one? Do you mean there was no one to bar unwanted strangers from my privacy?*' It is clear that Sidi is relegated to unwanted stranger which can still show as Baroka's attitude towards a lady who saluted him.

[The mummings can now be heard again, distantly. Sadiku and Lakunle become attentive the noise approaches, Lakunle increasingly uneasy. A little, but not too much notice is paid by the market people.]

Lakunle: what is that?

Sadiku: If my guess is right, it will be mummings. [Adds slyly] Somebody must have told them the news.

Lakunle: What news? [Sadiku chuckles darkly and comprehension breaks on the schoolteacher.] Baroka! You dared...? Woman, is there no mercy in your veins? He gave you children, and he stood faithfully by you and them. He risked his life that you may boast a warrior-hunter for your lord...but you sell him to the rhyming rabble gloating in your disloyalty...

Sadiku: [calmly deeps her hand in his pocket] Have you any money?

Lakunle: [snatching out her hand.] Why? What...keep away, witch! Have you turned pickpocket in your dotage?

Sadiku: Don't be a miser. Will you let them go without giving you a special performance?

Lakunle: if you think I care for their obscenity...

Sadiku: [wheedling.] Come on, school teacher. They will expect it of you ...the man of learning...the young spring of foreign wisdom...you must not demean yourself in their eyes...you must give them money to perform for lordship... (Soyinka, 1963, P. 56)

In the above excerpt Sadiku is portrayed as a woman who is deceitful and merciless towards her lord. When we look at Lakunle's speech, he condemns Sadiku of being disloyal to Baroka 'who gave her children, who stood faithfully by her and themummersand who risked his life'. From this conversation one can deduce that Sadiku, a woman, is depicted as sinister who devoured Baroka, a generous man, who sacrificed everything he could. Thus, it is plausible to say that Lakunle, the school teacher perceived that Sadiku is wicked. As a result of Lakunle's conclusion, we can say that women are represented as traitors.

When we come to Lakunle's speech act, he uses direct speech act which can be seen from the angle of face want. His speech is full of affront and it has been seen as a speech act performance that is baldly and without redressive act. Therefore, it can be seen that Lakunle holds a better position in this discourse which one way or the other shows the male-female power hierarchy in a given conversational scenario.

4. CONCLUSION

The aspects discussed in this paper have sought to indicate an alternative vantage point from which women's representation in literary products as compared to their male counterparts could be scrutinized. Therefore, in this study which was anchored on Wole Soyinka's Play 'The Lion and The Jewel', the position females had been given was inferior as inferred from the discursive analysis conducted using the tools indicated in the methodology section. As a result, the dialogues of the characters in this play clearly showed that the discourse analysis of a literary product renders a panorama of analytical perspectives that help us extract the multitude of value a certain literary text bears. It is a common trend to see literary analyses based on feminist literary criticism and that has been assumed by some critique as a protest analytical perspective owing to a long standing reliance on it. However, a different angle from which literary products can be approached would extremely revitalize proliferation of literary researches.

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