

Using Masculine Expressions to Address Beloved Women in Iraqi Folk

Poetry: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

One of the most valuable areas in sociolinguistics is one that deals with the social factors that affect certain grammatical aspects in a language. The proliferation of academic studies concerning men and 'masculinity' in the last twenty years has mirrored the growth of feminist studies of women and gender relations. Iraqi folk poetry is a wealthy area of variable social factors reflected in certain aspects language. The current study aims at investigating the Iraqi social impact on linguistic aspect of addressing woman with masculine expressions. It is intended to answer some questions concerning the Iraqi social factors which lead to address woman with masculine expressions in folk Iraqi poetry. Moreover, it investigates the social status of woman in Iraqi society and the traditions that this society have concerning woman.

Keywords: (folk poetry, masculine expression , feminine expression, gender)

ملخص البحث

ان احد اهم مجالات علم اللغة الاجتماعي هو ذلك المجال الذي يتناول العوامل الاجتماعية التي تؤثر في التركيب النحوية في لغة ما. وان تزايد الدراسات الاكاديمية التي تخص (الذكورية) في نهايات قرن العشرين اخذت تتعكس في نماء الدراسات المساندة للأنثوية في دراسة الجنس في اللغة. وان احد اغنى المساحات التي يتوفر فيها ذلك العامل الاجتماعي الذي يؤثر في تركيب اللغة هو الشعر الشعبي العراقي . تهدف هذه الدراسة في تفحص التأثير الاجتماعي العراقي في الهيئة اللغوية بمخاطبة الانثى بالعبارات الذكورية كما تعنى هذه الدراسة بالإجابة عن بعض الاسئلة التي تخص العوامل الاجتماعية التي تقود الى مخاطبة المرأة (الانثى) بعبارات ذكورية في الشعر الشعبي العراقي وكذلك بيان المنزلة الاجتماعية للمرأة في المجتمع العراقي والتقاليد الاجتماعية السائدة التي تخصها.

1. Introduction

To understand the very nature of the social effects in certain society on language, there is a need to raise questions such as what are the common norms and traditions of that society?, What role do these social factors play in language aspects? Do they really change the language rules in certain genre? Actually each text in literature has a social feature and the recent linguistic studies of human interaction have a vital role to deal with gender and feminism as sociolinguistic varieties. Masculine and feminine expressions are very important aspects to understand discourse of language interactions. Folk poetry is a powerful means in Iraqi society to convey feelings and attitude and protect the norms and traditions. Love poems in folk poetry are loaded with many masculine expressions which refer to beloved woman. The study investigates the effects of social factors on the aspects of Arabic vernacular language. This effect is reflected in Iraqi folk poetry in terms of male poet deliberately addresses his beloved woman using masculine expressions. Folk poetry is written in vernacular Arabic language. The study also sheds lights on these aspects in both Arabic and English to be clearly understood.

2. Folk Poetry

Historically speaking, Reaton (2004:3) states that in the past, Greek and foreign scholars have put forward a variety of reasons to study or collect

Greek folk songs. The reasons were merely implicit at times, they were explicitly stated in other cases.

Bamia (2001:12) argues that in general, however, it is impossible to separate the study of Greek folk poetry from either the widespread European interest in such matters dating from the mid - eighteenth century or from the movement towards the establishment and consolidation of the modern Greek nation in Greece and abroad.

The study of folk or oral poetry has started to be recognized as an academic discipline in recent years, and (ibid) believes that it is now possible to consider other people's folk poetry apart from the romanticism or nationalism that provided the initial stimulus for such studies. But the reasons for studying folk poetry were usually more complicated than a matter of literary taste. Thus, romanticism in Western Europe tended to rebel not only against established literary conventions but also against the social order, and terms "natural" and "spontaneous" were applied to folk poetry and "folk."

2.1 Folk poetry as messenger

Caton (1990:111) argues that in Arab societies, Arabic poetry, both folk and formal, remains a powerful verbal tool. Reynolds noted a similar tendency in the mere process of singing mawwals (a poem in colloquial Arabic).

Poetry has the ability to be both personal and communal, fulfilling the spirit of popular Arabic words, favoring indirect messages expressed through allusions and ellipses. Notable are love poems and songs, in both classical and colloquial Arabic, where a male singer usually addresses the beloved woman in masculine linguistic forms. (ibid,1995:155).

Folk poetry is one genre of literature which derives its lexical, vocabularies, structure and style from social life and vernacular language. It is written according to the way the life is in certain community. It doesn't include standard language and if so, it is used for stylistic contributions. However, folk poetry poet tries to reflect any social habit or personal attitude with a very nice literary image. The rhyme scheme is a very important condition literary system in folk poetry like the standard poetry.

Poets who write folk poetry should be skilled in different levels :

- 1- The linguistic level : it includes how to choose the most appropriate lexis in the most appropriate situation in order to affect or to attract the attention of the reader or hearer.
- 2- The culture knowledge: the poet should aware of all norms and conventions of the society. Each society has its own culture and norms which are different from other society.
- 3- The literary proponents: folk poetry has rhyme scheme and rhythm and these proponents are required and without them it will be not a poetry.
- 4- Poet should aware of the common expressions and proverbs since poetry is enriched with them.

2.2 Folk Poetry as Communicative Art

Generally speaking, language is a means of communication to convey thoughts, feelings and ideas from sender to receiver. Grice (1989: 220) explains that communicative intentions are intentions to produce some response on the part of the addressee. It seems that what the speaker usually intends by his or her communicative action is to change the mental states of the addressee. The intention of the speaker when a speaker says, for instance, '*It is raining*' could be to induce the addressee to believe that it is raining.

Folk poetry as one aspect of rhetoric does not appear to fit two participants taking turns, rather Ss / Ws are seen as making a presentation to Hs/Rs without expecting mutual communications. It is one-way communicative form that is only speaker or writer has turn role (Walton, 2007: 17).

3. Woman in Arabic Folk poetry

In pre-Islamic period, woman was something for shame. It was at least nothing. Ghidhdhami (2000:154) states that one of the Arabs poets who is called Al-Farazdaq mentioned that '*If a chicken crows like a cock, slaughter her.*' referring to chicken as woman when trying to take the man's role specially in writing or performing poetry. Although there are fewer female Arab poets than male poets, there are still some remarkable female poets who have chosen to 'crow like a cock,'.

Bassiouny (2009 :142) talks about the reasons why woman names are hidden in most of folk poetry. First, the power that man has in Arabic society makes him avoid mentioning woman's name in his poem. Second, man feels

with a shame if he declares his wife or beloved name. Third, man feels that his wife or beloved woman is for him only whether her beauty or her name so it is disallowed to others to mention her name on their tongue.

4. Iraqi Society Nature

Ali (source 1) shows that Iraq is a male - centered country, men's life here. With regard to Iraqi society, men are the center of the universe. [The state, the traditions, the laws, and the dominant culture are all on their side.](#) The social traditions and the dominant culture in Iraq are largely set up by men. In places where the dominant culture is regressive, the main purpose of women in life is to serve men and to keep them happy, but in places where the dominant culture is more liberal, women can have relative freedom to exist alone. But the matter is different from one city to another in sense that the south of Iraq is more restricted towered woman than middle and north cities. Folk poetry is exist in middle and south cities rather than other places. Woman in Iraqi society is represented as the honor of the family.

In Iraqi society, woman is a symbol of honor of the family and there are very restricted traditions the individual should follow to avoid problems. One of these traditions is that the individual should not mention woman's name (especially sister and wife) in poetry or any social writing. Some individuals dislike mention their mother's name in social and common conversations rather than their wives or sisters.

Bassiouney (2009:142) one fear that arises when one correlates language variation with independent quantifiable variables is that of falling into a circular argument. For example, if we examine language variation in terms of gender and social class, we must assume there are linguistic differences between different social classes and linguistic differences in relation to one's gender are also present. So, instead of building independent variables as they go along, linguists can begin by predetermining them and thus lose much of their insight into the real linguistic situation that characterizes a particular community. Especially in the Arab world, one can divide independent variables into two types: independent fixed variables (Chart 1) and independent flexible variables (Chart 2).

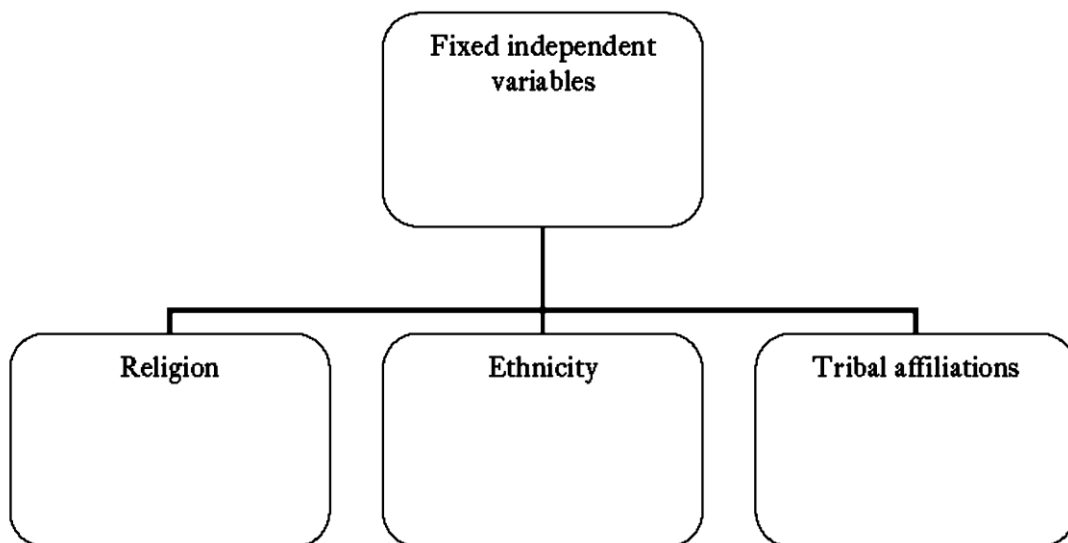


Chart 1 Fixed independent variables

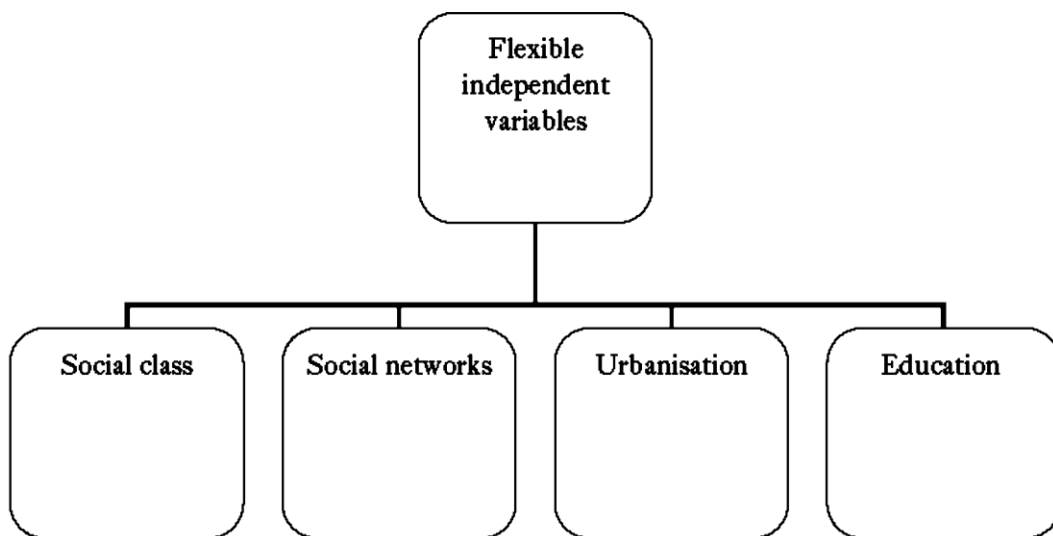


Chart 2 Flexible independent variables

4.1 Gender in Iraqi Society

Yule (2010: 247) classifies the term gender into three uses. First, Biological (or "natural") gender which is the distinction in "sex" between the "male" and "female" of each classes. Second, grammatical gender is the distinction between "masculine" and "feminine,". The third class is for social gender which is the distinction between "man" and "woman" to categorize individuals in terms of their social roles.

Iraq has an estimated population of over 39 million.¹ Iraqi women make up half of the total population and head one out of ten Iraqi households, 80% of whom are widows. About 71% of Iraqis live in urban areas and 13% of these urban households have more than ten occupants.³ Iraq is one of the world's most youthful countries; nearly 58.71% of the population is under the age of 24 (11,736, 897 males and 11,217, 392 females). (source 2)

There are several ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq, including Christians, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians and Yazidis. Approximately 96 percent of the country is Muslim, according to Minority Rights Group International.⁵ Due to wars, sanctions and conflicts, the people of Iraq have suffered the consequences of economic stagnation over the past few decades and reduced access to essential services. A decade - long war took its toll on Iraqi women and girls, coupled with years of sanctions and invasions. Women and girls witnessed increased access to education, health care and employment between the 1960s and the 1980s, but their conditions started to deteriorate significantly with the Iran – Iraq war (1980–1988). Sanctions imposed by the United Nations after the First Gulf War in 1991 brought additional problems for the Iraqi people, and 7 women witnessed their position deteriorating even further during the US - led war of 2003. The rise and rule of the terrorists in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) from 2014 to 2017 over significant territories of the Iraqi state exacted a very high cost on society in general with women suffering from direct as well as indirect violence and restrictions.

Oshri (2005:16) states that it is quite clear that the tendency of women to talk in the masculine about themselves is largely subconscious. Even the few who said that masculine talk resonated with male domination or who came up with instant and elaborate psychological explanations continued to use it,

ignoring their own actions. Furthermore, most people who are made aware of the phenomenon do not necessarily find it important or problematic. There's verse, though, what many find disturbing.

4.2 Power in Iraqi Society

Iraq is a male-centered country as many other Arab countries. Although Islamic rules focus on woman rights, the old traditions still control the society. The two powers in Iraqi society; religion and norms are very conflict but norms always control on the society.

Ahmed (2010:52) Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of human rights. According to UN Women, its impact ranges from immediate to long-term multiple physical, sexual and mental consequences for women and girls, including death. It adversely affects the overall well - being of women and prevents women from participating fully in society ; and it has tremendous costs, ranging from increased health care and legal expenses to productivity losses, impacting national budgets and overall development.

37% of Arab women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime, according to UN Women. In Iraq, one in five women and girls (21 percent) aged 15–49 were subjected to physical domestic violence in 2008.123 The Ministry of Planning's 2012 Iraq Woman Integrated Social and Health Survey (I-WISH) reports high levels of exposure to VAWG both internally and externally:

- 1- 73% of women between the ages of 15 and 45 reported that husband is the perpetrator of domestic violence, followed by father (53%), followed by other members of the family (43%).
- 2- 36% of married women were exposed to at least one form of husband psychological abuse: 23% had verbal abuse, 6% had physical abuse, and 9% had sexual abuse (including forced sexual intercourse, humiliating sexual behaviour, etc.).
- 3- During the month preceding the study, 46% of girls (10–14 years) experienced family violence (father, mother, brother or sister)(source 3)

4.3 Iraqi Woman and Knowledge

According to Bittar (2018:65), Iraq ranks for freedom of expression among the world's 20 lowest countries. The 2018 World Press Freedom Index — released by Reporters Without Borders — ranked Iraq 160th out of 180 countries based on pluralism assessment, media independence, quality of legislative framework, and journalists ' safety. This compares in 2005 to 137th, 2014 to 153rd and 2016 to 158th. These data shows a declining level of freedom of speech in Iraq over the past decades. Iraq has a medium rank in the World Press Freedom Index compared to other MENA countries. Political activists publicly blamed the rise of religious and sectarian movements and armed groups for the deterioration of freedom of expression in Iraq. "Self - censorship has become the norm, while crossing red lines requires large guts, generally leading to severe consequences. The only free space available is on social media where one can hide behind pseudonyms.

Salem (2017:12) mentions that social media is therefore viewed as "safer" and used by women and girls to express their ideas and opinions. However, there are no accurate statistics and data on the number of female users in Iraq. According to data from the World Bank in 2016, 21% of the total population is using the internet in Iraq. But these data are not disaggregated by gender or age to analyze access to the internet for women and youth. Regional women accounted for an average of 32.3% of total Facebook users by 2017. The proportion of females among Twitter and LinkedIn users is even lower at about 18% of total users. As such, the latter data is not segregated by age; a smaller gender gap among the younger generation would be expected. Freedom of speech is a basic right. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Iraq voted in favor of the 1948 UN General Assembly Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

5. Woman as a Masculine Referent

The inability of women to access men's public domain limits their choice of language in settings such as religion, politics, law, and literacy. Some religious terms, for example, *imama* "female religious leader" or *muftiya* "female religious legislator," are absent in the use of everyday language by women. Women are rarely competent public speakers with regard to politics because they mainly use oral languages. In general, the lack of women's

access to power spaces limits their linguistic choices or dictates specific language usage, particularly given that SA (i.e. Standard Arabic) is seen as a male language ; SA is associated with the public domain (religion, politics, law, education, etc.) that is less accessible to women (Albirini, 2016: 190-191).

According to Akomoto (1995:90), traditional Arab women are subordinate to men in their society. The extent varies by country, and you cannot generalize. In Iraq, women do not hold managerial positions and their opinions and input will most likely be ignored. Do not show any type of interest in an Arab woman or female members of an Arab family. Do not photograph them, stare at them or try to speak to them. Do not ask about women, it is considered too personal and rude. It is best to ask about the "family," not a person's wife, sister, or daughter.

According to the culture and norms of Iraqi society, there are some reasons behind folk poets addressing woman with masculine expressions:

- 1- The roots of this manner are related to the historical traditions of Arabs in general. The old common traditions of that society look to woman as a body that is created only to help man and to achieve his needs. Woman is no more than a machine without thoughts and knowledge. Thus, it is unacceptable to mention woman's name in men's writing.
- 2- Woman is a symbol of honor of Iraqi family and the restricted norms insist that woman should be unknown for public people but only for her family. It is prevented to mention woman's name in public occasions and the same in public writing.
- 3- The dominate of man is very prominent against woman. Man , in Iraqi society, is a symbol of power and strong and woman is a symbol of weakness and only man's name has to be mentioned.
- 4- Some folk poets see that the masculine expressions have a stylistic device to attract reader's attentions. It is considered as a stylistic deviation that the poet dose to strength his own style.

Data and Analysis

The lines of folk poems are selected from different Iraqi folk poets in different cities. These lines or poems are written by male poets addressing their beloved women with masculine expressions. Qualitative study is sufficient to prove the hypothesis that folk poetry includes masculine expressions used to refer to woman. In analyzing these lines, we will stand on the social factors that influence the aspects of language.

No.	Item	Masculine Aspect in Arabic and English		Feminine Aspect in Arabic and English	
1	شفته بالغنم سارح... زلفه يربط الجارح I saw him shepherd , his hair can tie the lion. (too long)	شفته (ه) زلفه (ه)	Him him	شفتها (ها) زلفها (ها)	Her Her
2	نايم المذلول .. حلو نومته أمسلهم أعيونه .. ونائر كخلته	نايم	He is slept	نايمة (ة)	She
3	فاركني صار هواي ولقي ونساني .. مادري شنهو الصار عاشكله ثاني	فاركني نساني	He departure me He forgot me	فاركنتي نسنتي	She She
4	جرحني وراح ولقي وجرحه اذى الروح .. وما فكر بعشر سنين عشرته	جرحني فكر	He hurts me He thinks	جرحتني فكرت	She .. She
5	حبيته حب ياناس لائلوموني .. اشكر عيونه وساع صابن عيوني	حبيته عيونه	I love him His eyes	حبيتها عيونها	Her Her
6	شفته ولجم سباح كلبي وفره الروح حسنه وجماله يصير يلسم للجروح	شفته حسنة جماله	I saw him His awesome His awesome	شفتها جمالها	Her Her her
7	شوصف عيونه وساع وخدوده وردي والشفه تمطر ديم واني على وعدي	عيونه خدوده	His eyes His cheeks	عيونها خدودها	Her her
8	جفاني ولمسه ما يابس قلم شعري .. وتركني وراح عني بعيد محبوبي	جفاني تركني	He left me He left me	جفنتي تركتني	She she

9	نسہ کلبي الیوده ویواسقة الراح .. تعبی وکل سهر لیلی ودمع عینی	نسہ	He forgot	نسنت	She
10	کلوله جرحه الماشفه ولا دمع عینه علیه نشف	کلوله	Tell him	کلولہه	Tell her
11	انا بلیاک کلبي شما یدک یبرد	بلیاک (ک)	Without you	بلیاج (ج)	you
12	کلولک حلو وخلوک بیه تحور والکک شوصف بیک وشعدد	کلولک (ک) خلوک (ک)	They tell you They make you	کلولج (ج) خلوج (ج)	you you
13	صدکنی احبک حب غریب الطور واحب صبرک علی وما کلت لاحد	صدکنی احبک (ک) صبرک (ک)	You, believe me I love you Your patient	صدکنی احبج صبرج	You You your
14	هسه الراح راح راح وبین ادیک الروح ..یس ذمة برکتبتک یوم لو سلت	ادیک برکتبتک	In your hands Your neck	ادیج برکتبتج	Your your
15	غفة رسمک یعینی من الصبا للیوم وطیوفک طیوفی بصحوتي والنوم	رسمک طیوفک	Your features Your dreams	رسمج طیوفج	Your your

6. Discussion

Folk poetry is one type of literature genres and it is very prominent in Iraqi society. It is performed in most of festivals and social occasions. Many social traditions and norms are found in folk poetry. The language reflects these traditions clearly via the deviations in structures and grammar.

All of these lines are selected from male folk poets from addressing their beloved woman with different masculine expressions. The study elaborates the masculine expressions in the table above and the feminine ones to explain the differences in their forms in two languages Arabic and English.

In Arabic vernacular language, masculine is referred by :

(٤ك , your) (he , pronoun ٥ ,) (you انت)

While feminine is referred by (انتِ, you), (pronoun ها, هي, she) (the suffix ج, your)

In most of these verses the masculine expressions clearly appeared either covert pronoun (like the suffix (ك) in (رسمك), (طيوفك), (احبك) while the feminine of these words are (رسمج), (طيوفا), (احبج) respectively or uncover pronoun (like فكر) (he thinks). The feminine aspect of these masculine items are different by either changing the suffix (ك) into (ج) or by changing the overt pronoun (هـ) like (عينه his eyes) into (ها) like (عينها her eyes).

In all of these verses, the poets address only beloved woman by masculine expressions and there is no woman as mother, sister, or daughter.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that the Iraqi traditions affect the structure of Arabic vernacular language concerning masculine and feminine aspects. These traditions and norms are rooted in the origins of the Arabic culture and very restricted towards woman in general and woman as a beloved in folk poetry. The social factors like power and dominant of man, honour of family and weakness of woman are all reflected in the Iraqi folk poetry. The study also sheds lights on the differences between the forms of masculine and feminine in Arabic vernacular and English. Woman is addressed by masculine expression is a beloved woman in folk poetry but not mother, sister or daughter.

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