

**A SOCIOLINGUSITIC STUDY OF PROFANITY AND
PUNGENT THEMES IN NAWAL EL-SADAWI'S *WOMEN
AT POINT ZERO***

Queen Esther Chioma Eneremadu

Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Arts,

Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri - Nigeria
E-Mail: Queen.Eneremadu@Alvanikoku.Edu.Ng

Ngozi Jovita N. Umelo

Department of Languages and Humanities,
School of General Studies,

Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri- Nigeria
E-Mail: Ngozi.Umelo@Alvanikoku.Edu.Ng Or
Ngoziumelo80@Gmail.Com

&

Gertrude Uchechi E. Okorie

Department of General Studies,
Rain Drops Institute of Management and Technology,
Amannachi, Orlu, - Nigeria
E-Mail: Okorieuchechi44@Gmail.Com

Abstract

The study investigates the adverse effects of profane words on women and the pungent themes in Sadawi's "*Women at Point Zero*". Profane language has been the scourge and the oppressive structure on so many women in a patriarchal society which tend to lower their self-value. Profane words are the menace with deeper destructive effects on women's psychological and emotional well-being. The pungent themes in the novel are both visceral/piecing-misogyny, sexual exploitation and harassment. Sadawi employs the pungent themes not only to convey the physical and psychological trauma melted on women but also to serve as a powerful narrative tool to challenge and divest societal negative norms. This paper adopts the qualitative descriptive approach to reveal the adverse effects of profane words and analyze the pungent themes of oppression, sexual exploitation and harassment on women. Twenty utterances (20) and three (3) themes constitute the data. The study

utilizes impoliteness theory of Jonathan Culpeper (1996) and the feminist theory of Moi, T. (1985) to analyze the data. The study reveals that most people resort to profane words to attack the hearer's face, to accuse, to influence, to prove authority over others and so on. Therefore, it is concluded that speakers should desist from the use of profane languages to avert the negative effects on hearers especially women. It is also revealed that oppression and sexual exploitation dehumanizes women and minimizes their potentials. The study recommends that teachers of English language and literature should teach learners the importance of polite and encouraging words.

Key Words: Sociolinguistic, Language, Profanity, Pungent, Feminist, Impoliteness

Introduction

Language is a social phenomenon which can be used to encourage, discourage, enhance/facilitate good or bad relationship, bring about hatred or generate conflict between interlocutors. Its existence and development is closely related to social culture, that is, language reflects the society and culture. Language is the cornerstone of culture (Bia Jiehong, 2007). We use language to persuade others to our convictions and urge them towards action by crafting text that demonstrate the logic and appeal to those convictions (Fasold & Linton, 2012). Language is evidently the most versatile means of communication among human beings. Through language, feelings, emotions, ideologies, desires, questions and so on are communicated. This study avers that language is used to create, influence, build or destroy one's well-being. Thus, it can be stated that profane utterances is the foundation of any ill treatment melted out on humans. The ill treatment can be physical or emotional. This confirms the Chinese adage "Sticks and stones may break my bone but words will break my heart".

Language is used playfully and figuratively in order to swear and to insult. This can be seen as euphemism. Euphemism is an important part of everyday speech. Many linguists, sociolinguists and anthropologists have noted the crucial role that euphemism plays in different aspects of real-world communication. Euphemism therefore, can be examined through different discourse; social, religious, linguistic, political and so on. It is also believed that euphemism is employed to

exert an effective emotional power on a listener's mind. Hence, euphemism is an expression intended by the speaker to be less offensive or troubling to the listener than the word or phrase it replaces (Sadock, 1993). People who design, use and construct language might be playing into conscious as well as unconscious choice of words. Cixous cited in Haste believes that language is male-dominated, that is, its form is masculine. Both how things are said and what is said reflect masculinity and particularly male sexuality. Every person takes on a particular role according to standards which are fixed in the society. Being a woman is closely linked with speaking 'properly'. The use of profane words is reserved for men only because women are not allowed to express any kind of control. Women hold a disadvantageous role in a society, that is, subordinate to that of men (knyazyan, 2015).

However, profanity is not gender-specific and is present in every language. Gender stereotypes are powerful means which serve to understand interactions between males and females. Stereotypes influence both the way both men and women act and the way they speak. Profanity is another aspect of daily life where double standard exists. When men use profane words, it is tough but when women do, it is uncouth. Linguistic behaviours of males and females differ greatly. Females are more likely to use linguistic forms which are thought to be more correct than those used by males. According to Trudgill (1983), females are generally more status conscious than males therefore, females are more sensitive to any linguistic norm.

Living free of fear is a fundamental development aspiration but, the pungent themes portray fear, shame, embarrassment and disappointment as can be seen from the study text. The perpetrator is not interested in the victim's welfare or growth rather to satisfy his sexual urge and enforce his superiority. This is the issue between Firdaus and her uncle who exploited her sexually. Sexual exploitation/harassment in the study text forms part of the themes in the novel. The pungent themes are vividly expressed in the novel which depicts societal ills that have degenerated to normal means of living. Profanity, oppression, sexual exploitation and prostitution are known as what societies condemn but all these turned to be the order of the day in Nawal el-Sadawi's "*Women at point zero*".

Objectives of the Study

This study is set to:

- ✓ Examine the way language is used to create profanity and how it affects women.
- ✓ Investigate the effects and implications of profane utterances on women.
- ✓ Explore the pungent themes in the study text.

Summary of the Study Text “*Women at Point Zero*”

The novel begins with an introduction in which the unnamed psychiatrist, the semi-fictionalized Saadawi, recalls her time as a prison psychiatrist in Egypt. At the time, she has no idea that she will one day be imprisoned for engaging in activism based on her empirical research. During one of her visits to Qanatir prison, the psychiatrist is referred to a prisoner whose story is said to be exceptionally powerful. The woman, Firdaus awaits the death penalty for murdering a pimp, but no one believes that she is capable of such a crime. Strangely, she rejects her doctor’s attempt to appeal her death sentence. The day before her execution; Firdaus accepts a meeting with the Psychiatrist. That day, Firdaus invites the Psychiatrist to sit on the ground and she tells her, her life story. She begins with her childhood. Her family is destitute and live in the country; her earliest memories are plagued by series of spouse and child abuses committed by her father. She seeks refuge in her friends, including a boy called Mohammadain, with whom she experiments sexually. Her mother discovers her relationship, prohibits it and circumcises her. Shortly after, both of her parents died and she went to live with her uncle, an academic in Cairo.

Firdaus’s life dramatically improves in Cairo. She and her uncle love each other and he allows her to go to school. When he gets married, his new spouse treats Firdaus poorly and arranges for her to go to a boarding school. Firdaus is an industrious student but due to her unresolved traumas with her parents and her genital mutilation, struggles with her sexuality and attachments. She withdraws into books and befriends a teacher called Miss Iqbal. At graduation, Firdaus receives an award, but no family members are present to support her. Miss Iqbal supports her instead. Afterward, her uncle arrives and retrieves her. Firdaus’s next stay at her Uncle’s house is difficult. She once overhears her Uncle and Aunt discussing their plans to marry her off to her aunt’s

deformed, sixty-year old Uncle named Sheikh Mahmoud. Firdaus runs away, however, finding the streets more dangerous than home, she returns home and is married to the abusive Sheikh Mahmoud. She runs away again and meets a coffee shop owner, Bayoumi. After a brief relationship, he becomes controlling and locks her in his apartment while sending his friends in to have sex with her. She escapes and flees to the city. While seeking refuge beside the Nile, Firdaus is approached by a woman who looks rich. She introduces herself as a prostitute. Sharifa has recruited Firdaus as a sex worker beneath her. When Firdaus overheard Sharifa and her friend Fawzy arguing about their ownership of her, she runs away and becomes a prostitute without a boss. She becomes self-sufficient and works her way out of prostitution and into an office job. She feels somewhat cloistered in her new role but falls in love with a man named Ibrahim who makes the job bearable. She then finds out that Ibrahim is engaged to her boss's daughter. Firdaus quits her job and reenters the sex industry. By this point, she has built up a wealthy clientele; so popular is she that she is able to turn away men to assert her power. When Ibrahim returns to her pleading for her to love him again, she refuses. A pimp came for her and manages her clients for a while, but the relationship turns abusive and she kills him in the heat of a violent dispute. Afterwards, she meets an Arab prince who gives her £3,000 in exchange for sex. After sleeping with him, she destroys the money and attacks him. He calls the police, who identifies Firdaus as the pimp's killer. She is then tried in court and given a death sentence. At the end of the novel, Firdaus tells Nawal that she eagerly awaits death because it will offer her relief from life and possibly an escape to a new life.

Conceptual Clarifications

Sociolinguistics

According to Holmes (1992), sociolinguistics is the study that has relationship with language and society in the world. This agrees with Fasold's (1991) idea that sociolinguistics is the science that combines linguistics and society. Brown (2000) also believes that sociolinguistics is a sub-discipline of linguistics which examines the relationship between language and culture as well as language and society. Wardhaugh (2006) sees sociolinguistics as a study of correlation between language and society regarding social variables (e.g social

class, sex, gender etc) to see how language is exercised in communication and how social contexts affect language. Wardhaugh (2010) further says that sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society with the aim of understanding how languages function in communication. It is also the study of language in relation to society. This study on sociolinguistics is concerned with the effects of language use/utterances on women. Holmes (2013) explains how language reflects the people and their background or vice versa. Similar to gender, language varieties also occur in terms of someone's educational level or background of knowledge. For example, people from high educational background have different language style whether in terms of choice of words or the complexity of grammar. However, there are other social variables beside gender and education (e.g social class, geographical area and culture). Social variables play significant roles in making language variations. Language variation is a neutral term for kinds of linguistic differences which can be observed based on various linguistic devices such as sound, meaning or lexicon (Chambers and Trudgill, 2004). Hence, the use of different aspects of language demonstrates different language variations. For instance, the use of bad language (e.g. bad words) is an example of a language variation as opposed to good language (Davis, 1989). For example, the word 'fuck' is one lexical variety for 'fornicate', 'sexual intercourse'; it is an instance of a 'bad word' in a formal purpose.

Language and Attitude

The relationship between language and society is intertwined. The choice of language and its use depends on ethnicities, social class, context, gender and age (Baron, 2005). Some language variations are not free from social attitudes, since a part of them is considered as good while the rest belong to bad (Battistella, 2005). Battistella explains that the attribute 'good' and 'bad' is a matter of social desires which are seen to be mainstream, not characteristics possessed or embedded in the language itself. As a result, what is considered bad might be dissimilar when an expression is accounted in other groups of people. For instance, a man can comfortably use profane words and mention some private parts of the body in public but this is unacceptable when a woman uses such words.

As opposed to good language which displays positive social attitudes, bad word/language does not reflect social desires in terms of grammatical inaccuracy, coarseness, regional and international influences. McEnery (2006) is of the view that bad language is expressions perceived to be unpleasant and offensive by most people. Such view displays a correlation between language and social attitudes creating impropriety of language. An expression is considered to be improper because it is tabooed or stigmatized by the members of the society. An example of inappropriate expression which might cause offence is swearing. (McEnery, 2006).

Profanity

Profanity can sometimes be interpreted as antisocial, harmful and abusive if, for example, it is intended to harm or convey aggression and hostile emotions (Stone, McMillan and Hazelton, 2015). Mabry (2008), says that profanity also refers to the use of obscene language including taboo and swear words, which in regular social settings are considered inappropriate and in some situations unacceptable. Mabry further says that profanity includes sexual references, blasphemy, objects eliciting disgust, ethnic-racial-gender slurs, vulgar terms or offensive slang. On the other hand, Jay and Janschewitz (2012) advise that instead of thinking of swearing as uniformly harmful or morally wrong, more meaningful information about swearing can be obtained by asking what communication goals swearing achieves. They went further to say that swear words can achieve a number of outcomes as when used positively for jokes or storytelling, stress management, fitting in with the crowd or as a substitute for physical aggression.

Speech involving profane words has a stronger impact on people than regular speech and has been shown to be processed on a deeper level in people's minds (Jay, Caldwell-Harris and King, 2008). Jay (1992) mentioned that profanity exists at all age groups. Jay and Janschewitz (2008) noted that profanity is a natural part of language development and that male speech differs from female speech in terms of profanity. Lynneng (2015) agrees with Jay and Janschewitz when she claims that studies have shown that men have a tendency to use stronger profane words than women. Profanity is the use of taboo language with the purpose of expressing the speaker's emotional state and communicating the information to listeners (Jay, 2000). The reasons for

using profane words depend on the person and the situation, yet profanity is commonly related to the expression of emotions such as anger, frustration or surprise (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008). When profanity is perceived as an affront to a listener, this may be considered rudeness on behalf of a speaker. Assessing whether profanity in discourse is rudeness involves the difficult task of determining participants' identity, relationship, social norms, intentions and motivations.

Ljung (2011) says that profanity as an example of bad language is the use of tabooed expression functioning to show the swearer's feelings or attitudes. He further said that an expression is considered to be a profane word when it breaks against what is unable to be talked or done according to social norms. For instance, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, when a man is afflicted with swelling in the stomach and the limbs, he is not allowed to die in the house. He will be carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die. The sickness is an abomination to the earth. However, the more an expression or action is tabooed, the more effects of profanity can be achieved. This is to say that the power of swearing to create particular effects relies heavily upon contexts because taboo is a culture-specific phenomenon.

McEnery (2006) states that the intensity of offensiveness created by expressions for profanity is also determined by process of stigmatization. Hastings-Duffield (2015) says that stigmatization brings an object or an act which is initially neutral to be bad by disapproving the object or the act. *Fuck*, for instance, is originally a neutral term for denoting having sexual intercourse which is equivalent with having *coitus* or *copulation*. However, because *fuck* gets a negative label, it becomes more offensive than *coitus* and *copulation*. McEnery further explains that profanity indicates the swearer's emotional state, social class and educational background. Profanity is associated with someone's present emotional state. An interjection is used as a technique of releasing strong emotions. He also focuses on how offensive swear words are, ranging from very mild to very strong swear words. McEnery created a 'scale of offence' where he graded profane words.

Scale of offence by McEnery (2006)

Very mild: bird, bloody, crap, damn, hell, hussy, idiot, pig, pillock, sod, son-of-a-bitch, tart etc.
Mild: arse, balls, bitch, buggar, cow, dickhead, git, jew, moron, pissed off, screw, shit, slag, sod, tit, tusser etc.
Moderate: arsehole, bastard, bollocks, gays, nigger, piss, pofter, prick, shag, whore etc.
Strong: Fuck
Very Strong: Cunt, Motherfucker etc

Coates (2004) argues that women are more polite and indirect because they are subordinate to men while men are impolite and direct. Lynneng (2015) has a different opinion from Coates. According to Lynneng, speech is not based on gender but it is driven by factors such as setting/location, the situation, the relationship between the speaker/listener. Lynneng further argues that there is no general consensus on whether women use more or fewer profane words and some studies have shown that they swear just as much as men while others such as McEnery has shown that they use milder words.

Pungent Theme

There are various themes that are discernable from Nawal El-Sadawi's "women at point zero". Paramount amongst the themes are:

1. The theme of radical change/resistance against male dominance/oppression: This is evident from Firadus ultimate rebel against societal norm by refusing to be oppressed further which led to her action of committing murder.
2. Theme of moral decadence and exploitation: This is reflected in the lives of the politicians, government officials, marriages, religion and the high ups in the society where corruption is the order of the day. A situation where no one is to be trusted. This is evident in the protagonist's experiences in the novel.
3. Theme of sexual exploitation and prostitution: The author presents a hypocritic society that condemns prostitution but enabling the same system that forces women into sex work as a means of livelihood. Firadus experience exemplifies how the

female bodies are commodities which are controlled also by men either through marriage or prostitution.

4. The theme of patriarchy and gender oppression: The author exposes the oppression of women in Egypt and also the patriarchal structures that deny women autonomy, dignity and relegates them to the background. Men have every power in the society to do as they want. They subject women to sexual harassment and abuse, physical and emotional oppression without any value to the women folks as evident in the life of the protagonist Firadus hence the title of the novel “women at point zero”.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on impoliteness theory by Jonathan Culpeper (1996) and feminist theory by Moi, T. (1985).

Impoliteness theory

Impoliteness theory can be traced back to Goffman's theory of face. This theory is placed as a parallel to Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. Unlike politeness which has gained a central place in language study, there is no significant amount of literature concerning linguistics impoliteness (Bousfield, 2008).

Jonathan Culpeper (1996) made good use of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness to introduce his theory of impoliteness which is considered a “parasite of politeness”. Although impoliteness is based on Brown and Levinson's politeness, Culpeper refutes Brown and Levinson's view of politeness as “marginal” to everyday conversation. Impoliteness theory asserts that understanding the notion of politeness is impossible without comprehending impoliteness phenomenon therefore the analytical framework of impoliteness needs to be improved and receive the due consideration (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010). The Culpeper's model has an advantage because it is built on real life data. Watts cited in Lambrou and Stockwell (2007) states that “...impoliteness is a term that is struggled over at present, has been struggled over in the past and will in all probability continue to be struggled over in the future”. Watts' definition implies the continuity of disagreement over the notion of impoliteness among scholars.

Walaszewska and Piskorska (2012) state that impoliteness is intended to produce disharmony between interlocutors in social interactions. The most well-known definition of impoliteness is mentioned by Culpeper cited in Bousfield and Locher (2008) in which he described impoliteness “as the use of strategies designed to attack face and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony”. Based on Brown and Levinson’s politeness strategy, Culpeper created impoliteness strategy. The politeness strategies are the opposite of impoliteness strategies. That is, politeness strategy is utilized to support face while impoliteness strategies are used to attack face which can cause social disharmony. Culpeper (1996) defines impoliteness as the use of strategies to attack the interlocutors’s face. Hence, Culpeper proposes five super strategies for impoliteness.

Super-Strategies For Impoliteness

Culpeper sets up five super strategies by which impoliteness can be created and received:

Bald on Record Impoliteness: According to Bousfield (2008), this strategy is employed when there is much face at risk and when a speaker intends to damage the hearer’s face thus the impolite utterance will be performed directly and clearly. Culpeper used the concept of Face Attack Act (FAA) in opposite to Face Threatening Act (FTA) in order to identify the face attack where there is a deliberate intention on the part of the speaker (Mulley and Stockwell, 2010). Wieczorck (2013) explains clearly the differences between Brown and Levinson’s bald on record politeness and Culpeper’s bald on record impoliteness. Bald on record politeness is applied in particular situations where the risk to face is minimal without any intention to attack the hearer’s face while Culpeper’s bald on record is used when there is much risk to the face and the speaker intends to damage the other’s face.

Positive Impoliteness: Bousfield and Locher (2008) claim that this strategy is used to damage the hearer’s positive face want. Culpeper (2005) cited in Mullany and Stockwell (2010) adds a range of sub-strategies to positive impoliteness and these include:

- a. Ignoring and snubbing the other.
- b. Denying common ground with the hearer
- c. Selecting a sensitive or undesirable topic to talk about.
- d. Using appropriate identity markers.

- e. Being disinterested and unsympathetic with the hearer.
 - f. Looking for disagreements.
 - g. Using obscure language and inserting secretive words without the discourse.
 - h. Using taboo words.
- Negative Impoliteness: This strategy is designed to attack the hearer's negative face want (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013). Culpeper (2005) cited in Mullany and Stockwell (2010) says that negative impoliteness involves the following sub-strategies:
- (a) Scorn (b). Frighten (c). Ridicule and (d). invade the hearer's space or metaphorically.

Sarcasm or Mock Politeness: Culpeper's sarcasm or mock politeness is synonymous to Leech (1983) conception of irony. According to Thielemann and Kosta (2013), in this strategy, the speakers perform the FTA using politeness strategies which are clearly insincere. In other words, sarcasm means the use of one or more sub-strategies which are superficially suitable and accepted but deeply, they have the opposite meaning (Bousfield, 2008).

Withhold Politeness: Withhold Politeness happens when a speaker does not do politeness strategy that is wished by the hearer, or the speaker just keeps silent (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013). Culpeper (1996) adds that withhold politeness is the absence of politeness work where politeness would be expected. For Culpeper, politeness has to be communicated and the absence of communicated politeness may be seen as the absence of a polite attitude.

Feminist Theory

This theory by Moi, T. (1985) highlights gender oppression, female resistance and patriachalism in the society. The purposes of this theory include;

- Understanding the difference between the powers expressed by men and women
- To have an insight into the oppression of the women; how it started, how it changes over the years and how other forms of oppression have come to be
- Observing ways to overcome these operations

The main aim of feminist theory is justice and equality for women everywhere and also for men and children who are linked to these women. Though the female protagonist in the study text was relegated to the background, used and dumped by the male folks.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Excerpt 1: They are going to hang her in a few days time. What use are you, or anybody else to her? Leave her alone! (Pg.2).

Excerpt 2: Compared to her, I was nothing but a small insect crawling upon the land amidst millions of other insects (Pg.3).

Excerpt 3: Tomorrow morning, I shall no longer be here. Nor will I be in my place known to man. This journey to a place unknown to everybody on this earth fills me with pride (Pg.9).

Excerpt 4: For after all, I was only a successful prostitute (Pg.9).

Excerpt 5: However, every single man I did get to know filled me with but one desire; to bring it smashing down on his face. But because I am a woman, I have never had the courage to lift my hand. And because I am a prostitute, I hid my fear under layers of make up (Pg. 10).

Excerpt 6: Mohammadain used to pinch me under water and follow me into the small shelter, made of mazie stalks. He would make me lie down beneath a pile of straw and lift up my galabeya. We played as “bride and bridegroom”. From some parts in my body, where exactly I did not know would come a sensation of sharp pleasure (Pg.10).

Excerpt 7: He was doing me what Mohammadain had done to me before. In fact, he was doing even more but I no longer felt the strong sensation of pleasure that radiated from unknown and yet familiar part of my body. I closed my eyes and tried to reach the pleasure I had known before but in vain. It was as if I could no longer reach the exact spot from which it used to arise or as though a part of me of my being was gone and would never return (Pg.13).

Excerpt 8: For like most people, I had many brothers and sisters. They were like chicks that multiply in spring, shiver in winter and lose their feathers and then in summer are stricken with diarrhea, waste away quickly and one by one creep into a corner and die (Pg.17).

Excerpt 9: His mouth was like that of a camel with a big opening and wide jaws (Pg.18).

Excerpt 10: Her sluggish body swayed from side to side when she walked with the wadding movement of a well-fed duck (Pg.22).

Excerpt 11: In the morning, she would empty her basket of the chicken, eggs and bread cakes it contained, hook it over her arm and leave. I would say to her, “stay just another day with us Grandma”, but my uncle never said a word and neither did his wife (Pg. 23).

Excerpt 12: I knew that women did not become heads of state (Pg. 25).

Excerpt 13: She is a good girl but the world is full of bastard (Pg.37).

Excerpt 14: A virtuous woman was not supposed to complain about her husband. Her duty was perfect obedience (Pg.47).

Excerpt 15: How dare you raise your voice when you’re speaking to me, you street walker, you low woman (Pg.52).

Excerpt 16: Slut, bitch! (Pg.53).

Excerpt 17: What did the son of a dog do to you (Pg.55).

Excerpt 18: You’re a prostitute and it’s my duty to arrest you, and others of your kind (Pg.67).

Excerpt 19: See how wonderful I am. I’m trying to lift her out of the mud before it’s too late, that slut of a woman (Pg.97).

Excerpt 20: How can you be one of the masters? A woman on her own cannot be a master, let alone who’s a prostitute. Can’t you see you’re asking for the impossible? (Pg.104).

Language use which depicts profanity has a direct connection to our emotions. It is a reflection of one’s emotion such as anger, worry, passion or excitement. Based on the data presented, the above excerpts are all profane utterances and impolite words that were borne out of emotions to seek disagreement from the addressee. In as much as the utterances are profane, they also represent impoliteness which has different types. Excerpts **1, 2, 16** and **19** are the dysphemistic type of profanity and affective type of impoliteness. Excerpts **9, 11, 13, 15,** and **17** are profane utterances with dysphemism but of types of impoliteness.

While excerpts **9, 11, 15** and **17** reflect the pungent themes of oppression, anxiety and loss of self-confidence, excerpt **13** is the coercive type of impoliteness. According to Culpeper (2011) “impoliteness coercion is often not an acceptable way of achieving a realignment of values”.

Excerpts **3, 4, 8** and **10** are all euphemism type of profanity but of different types of impoliteness. While excerpt **3** depicts coercive impoliteness, excerpt **4** represents entertainment impoliteness whereas excerpts **8** and **10** stand for affective impoliteness. Profane words can creep into one’s vocabulary consciously or unconsciously until it becomes a normal way of talking or reaction in every situation. They are capable of creating bad impression about someone and also depict lack of control, bad attitude as well as immaturity.

Furthermore, excerpts **6, 7** and **18** are all taboo type of profanity. Excerpt **6** represents the entertainment type of impoliteness, excerpt **18** reflects the coercive impoliteness while excerpt **7** deals with the pungent theme of sexual harassment. Excerpts **5, 12, 14** and **20** are the typical representation of the pungent themes of oppression, sexual exploitation/harassment. The themes create anxiety, lack of self-worth, humiliation, and loss of self confidence on women. Profane utterances adversely affect women. This claim is reflected in the life of Firdaus who sees herself as been dead in a man’s world.

Figuratively speaking, Firdaus lives as a sub-human. Even when she has an opportunity to live again by pleading for leniency for her case, she refused to do so instead, she constructs an invisible wall to separate herself from the world. It is evident in the novel that the complete control of Firdaus’s life right from the cradle to the grave is a patriarchal one. Firdaus spend her life at the mercy of her father, uncle, husband, boss and her male clients. Firdaus reveals that she has been given enough reasons by her own family to regard herself and her generation as an inferior one. Her father neglected her, her mother and her female siblings. The domineering attitude of men over women is perceived through the novel as thus;

When one of his female children dies, my father would eat his Supper, my mother would wash his legs and then he would go to Sleep just as he did every night. When the child that died was a boy, He would beat my mother, then have his supper and lie down to sleep (Pg.18).

Firadus the protagonist in the fictional narrative is used by El-Sadawi to unravel how women are being treated in the society. The desires of men are gotten through women. This is the oppression against women which is bound to affect the female's psychology and that leads to the use of impolite utterances to insult. This is also seen in pg. 18 as thus "His mouth was like that of a camel with a big opening and wide jaws".

Conclusion

From the findings, this study concludes that there are a lot of profane words are borne out of emotions. The swear words can also be used to entertain the hearer. It was also observed that the men see themselves as superiors to women because of the stereotyped traditional gender roles. The profane words and the pungent themes reflect hostility towards women; women liberate themselves from the claws of these men through determination. This is evident in the life of Firdaus,

Recommendation

This study recommends that profane words should not be used to devalue women in the society but rather encouraging and motivational utterances should be adopted to maximize women's potentials and growth. Again, men should desist from sexual exploitation and oppression against women to avert depression and suicide.

References

- Baron, N.S. (2005). Discourse structures in instant messaging: The case of utterance breaks. *LanguageInternet*, 7 (2010), article 4 (www.languageinternetdu.urnnbnri.de 0009-7-2-6514, ISSN 1860-2020)
- Battistella, L.E. (2005). *Bad language: Are some words better than others?* New York: Oxford University Press. Print
- Bousfield, D. (2008). *Impoliteness in interaction*. USA: John Benjamins Publishing. Print
- Bousfield, D. and Locher, M.A. (eds.). (2008). *Impoliteness and power in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter. Print
- Brown, H.D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. NY: Pearson Education. Print

- Chambers, J.K. and Trudgill, P. (2004). *Dialectology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Print
- Coates, J. (2004). *Women, men and language: A sociolinguistic account of gender differences in language* (3rd ed.). Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited. Print
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: using language to cause offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Print
- _____. (1996). "Towards an anatomy of impoliteness". *Journal of pragmatics* 25: 349-367.
- Davis, J. (1989). *The sociolinguistics of the deaf community*. UK: Academic Press. Print
- El Saadawi, N. (1983). *Woman at point zero*. London: Zed Books LTD. Print
- Fasold, R.W. (1991). *The sociolinguistics of language: Introduction to sociolinguistics Vol 2*. Washington DC: Wiley-Blackwell. Print
- Fasold, R. W. and Linton, J.C. (2012). *An introduction to language and linguistic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hastings-Duffield, H.G. (2015). *Reuben and women*. New York: Page Publishing Inc. Print
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson. Print
- _____. (1992). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. London: Longman. Print
- Jay, T. (2000). *Why we curse?* Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Print
- _____. (1992). *Cursing in America: A psycholinguistic study of dirty language in the courts, in the movies, in the schoolyards and on the streets*. Philadelphia: J. Benjamins. Print
- Jay, T., Caldwell-Harris, C., & Kings, K. (2008). Recalling taboo and non-taboo words. *American Journal of Psychology*. 121, 83-103.
- Jay, T. and Janschewitz, K. (2012). The science of swearing. *The observer*, 25, 5-6. www.psychologicalscience.org
- Knyazyan, A. (2015). Gender and disparaging humour. *A Journal of Armenian Folia Anglistiks* 11(2(14)), 25-32.
- Lambrou, M. and Stockwell, P. (2007). *Contemporary stylistics*. London: Continuum. Print
- Ljung, M. (2011). *Swearing. A cross-cultural linguistic study*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Print

- Lynneng, N.T.R. (2015). "Oh my goodness!" A corpus investigation of euphemisms from a sociolinguistic perspective. *Master thesis, Oslo: University of Oslo Library.*
- McEnery, T. (2006). *Corpus-based language studies: An advanced resources book*. Canada: Routledge. Print
- Moi, T. (1985). *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. Routledge
- Mullany, L. and Stockwell, P. (2010). *Introducing English language: A resource book for students*. UK: University of Nottingham. Print
- Sadock, J.M. (1993). *Towards a linguistic theory of speech acts*. New York: Academic Press. Print
- Thieleman, N. and Kosta, P. (eds.). (2013). *Approaches to slavic interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Print
- Walaszewska, E. and Piskorska, A. (2012). *Relevance theory: More than understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Print
- Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. (5th ed.). UK: Blackwell Publishing. Print
- Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. (6th ed). United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Wieczorck, A.E. (2013). *Clusivity: A new approach to association and dissociation in political discourse*. Cambridge: University Press. Print