# A Pragmatic Analysis of Woman's Images in Selected English and Arabic Proverbs[1]

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## ABSTRACT

This study is within the framework of linguistics that tries to analyze written and spoken discourse and study its features through pragmatic tools to understand the process of communication. The study mainly aims to seek the meaning through pragmatic analysis to reveal both negative and positive depiction about women in some English and Arabic proverbs. The samples were taken from different written and spoken sources. The study concluded that proverb had various expressions that consist of imperative, prohibitive, conditional and compound negative construction. Semantic meaning is different from pragmatic function that is related to the background story of the proverb used to support; object of ridicule the context if it is violates the human civilizational norms.

**Keywords**:  *proverbs; characteristics; Pragmatic; images.*

## PRAGMATICS : DEFINITIONS AND TOOLS

Pragmatics is a field of linguistics that deals with the ways language is related to the texts in which it is used. As this definition indicates, pragmatics merges as a diverse and coherent domain of investigation only in relation to the study of language distant from its use in context, which has been the main focus of both twentieth-century linguistics and philosophy of language. The issues naturally discoursed under the title
of pragmatics arise from a diversity of difficulties and standoffs described in the analysis of language away from context; and as a result, they constitute a diverse assortment, containing deixis, presupposition, speech acts, implicatures, politeness, information structure, and so on.

The domain of pragmatics  appears at the combination of two philosophical schools: American pragmatism and logical positivism. The term was led by Charles Morris, who inspired it out of the name of the American philosophical school allied with Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey .Morris's justification of the effective of signs depends deeply on the semiotic outline of Peirce, though he enhances an extra trichotomy distinctive three divisions of the study of signs .(Morris [1938]1971, 43).

### Grices Maxims

How to distinguish between the meaning of the speaker and sentence meaning, advanced remarkably in the work of Paul Grice. What makes Gricean pragmatics denote itself as  a remarkable  branch of linguistics is some points; (i) the meaning  is based on speakers' intentions (and not the context-independent meaning of lexical and grammatical forms) and (ii) a kind of inferential perceptive that permits contributors to attach what is said to what is meant (as contrasting to the rule- and convention-based accounts offered in grammatical and semantic analyses). conversational implicatures regards as one of  Grice's most influential contributions. It  is a outline for conversational implicatures, through which the speaker meaning of utterances in a cooperative conversation is basically a function of sentence

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meaning (the meaning of the underlying propositions) . The context of meaning occurrence, relates to background information, and several purportedly universal, rational maxims of conversation (Grice 1975).

The philosopher H.P. Grice (1913-88) indicates that conversational implicatures refer to the deduced implications out of the form of an utterance depending on the basis of certain co-operative principles, which direct and achieve the level of efficiency and normal acceptability of interaction. Levinson (1983:104), states that implicatures are inferences that are based on both the content of what has been said or stated and some specific assumptions about the co-operative nature of ordinary verbal interaction and conversation rather than being semantic inferences.

Grice (1975 as cited in Wardhaugh, 1986:281) states his principle in conversation as 'cooperative principle' as following: 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.' Grice proposes four maxims that consist his cooperative principle thesis. **Renkema** (1993:10) mentions these maxims as follows:

I- Maxims of quantity (Quantity)
  1) "Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the purpose   of the exchange at hand)".
  2) "Do not make your contribution more informative than is required."

II- Maxims of quality (Quality)
Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
Maxims: 1) "Do not say what you believe to be false."
        2) "Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence."

III- "Maxim of relevance (Relevance)"
  1)   "Be relevant"

IV- "Maxims of manner (Manner)"
   Supermaxim: "Be perspicuous"
Maxims: 1) "Avoid obscurity of expression."
        2) "Avoid ambiguity"
        3) "Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)."
        4) "Be orderly."

These maxims of the cooperative principle are used to describe how interactants in a conversation derive and understand implicatures.

Sometimes Grice uses the term 'violate' as the same meaning of 'infringe'. One might flout a maxim—he may deliberately fail to fulfill it. Bach and Harnish (1979 cited in Salman (ibid.)) approve the neutral term 'infringement' to denote to any failure to fulfill a maxim and consequently the cooperative maxim. "Infringement" includes two types:

a. Flouting' which refers to the breaking of Grice's maxims intentionally.
b. 'Violation' which refers to the breaking Grice's maxims unintentionally.

Regarding the failure to fulfill a maxim, Grice (1975 as cited in Martinich (ed.), 1996:161) contends failing to fulfill one or more of the maxims could occur in different ways as follows (Marmaridou, 2000:230) Chapman (2000:135) (Mey, 1993:76) (Thomas, 1995:65):

i. Interactants may not intend to mislead others, although they appear to be uncooperative.

ii. Interactants may quietly and unostentatiously **violate** a maxim; which in some cases, they will be liable to mislead.

iii. Interactants may **opt out** from both of the maxim and of the cooperative principle as well; they may indicate, say, or allow it to become plain as they are unwilling to cooperate and fulfil or observe the requirements of the maxim.

iv. Interactants may be faced by a **clash**: they may be unable to fulfil or observe the maxim of quantity without violating the maxim of quality.

**Politeness Phenomena**

Grundy (1995:127) contends that politeness phenomena are one of the pragmatic usage and manifestations that are contextually determinate according to many criteria such as power-distance relationship of the interactants and the degree of speaker's imposition (Wolfson, 1989 as cited in Kasper, 1990:210)

In literature, politeness is considered, as an aspect of speech style, consequently; there is a polite style and an impolite one. That is to mean, a single style could be considered as polite in a particular context, but impolite in another. Some consider politeness as an aspect of convention and traditions according to appropriateness and inappropriateness ways of speaking (Arndt and Janny, 1985:283).

Van Dijk (1977:201) relates the pragmatic of appropriateness of any utterance with the stylistic rhetorical variations, which ultimately define and limit the degree of effectiveness and willingness of the utterance's perlocutionary level.

Fraser (1990:7) proposes four ways of inspecting politeness in the literature, which are:

i. The "social-norm" view

ii. The "conversational-maxim" view

iii. The "face-saving" view

iv. The "conversational-contract".

Locher and Watts (2005:21) observe that during any communicative exchanges and social interaction, politeness strategies and tools serves not only for the presentation and maintenance, but also for the adjustment of the presentation of both self and others. This requires from the different interactants anticipating the actions and the behaviors of others.

However, Harris (2011: 104) points out the existence of two sides of politeness which are:

i. the *face-enhan*
ii. the *face-enhancement* or *supportive strategies* in order to enhance self or others' image, personality and actions

iii. the *face-threatening* or *aggravation* in order to diminish self or others' image, personality and actions

These two kinds are previously called by Gibbons (2003:113) as *status reduction and status support.*

The 'face enhancement' and the 'face aggravation or reduction' of witnesses for the aim of establishing a link between 'face, credibility, competence, image and status'.

The face-aggravating or reduction strategies, aims at threatening the image of the apposite character and reduce his credibility, ability and competence as Cotterill (2003) observes.
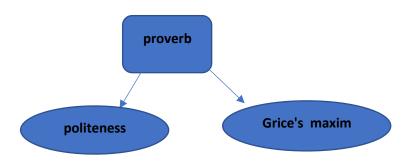
## WHAT'S A PROVERB?

A proverb is a brief, simple, traditional saying that gives advice based on practical experience, often in the form of a metaphor or allegory Proverbs are popular in spoken language, and form part of the folklore of a culture, passing down the generations.

Though opinions on women in various cultures are enlightened to a great extent, one can notice a number of recent and historical proverbs that deal with women in a negative way. This research deals with those proverbs that talk on women in negative way.(Mieder, 2004:133)

**DATA AND ANALYSIS.**

**Model of analyses**



**English proverbs**

*1-"A house well-furnished makes a woman wise."*

In this English verb , the receiver will immediately relate the women's wisdom to material objects instead of moral and reason. As a result . The maxims of relevance and quantity are violated, since there is no relation between wisdom and a piece of furniture. At the same time, this proverb lack the evidence to prove any connection between the well furnished house and the intelligibility of women.

Since politeness phenomena are considered as one of the pragmatic usages and manifestations by revealing aspects of power and discrimination. In this proverb there is a noticeable face-threatening or aggravation in order to diminish women's image and personality. So , it is regarded an impolite state.

*2- "There was never a conflict without a woman."*

This proverb depicts a clear contempt for women. This description portraits an obvious example of impolite style and face threatening. There is no need to relate problems and conflict with the existence of a woman since many troubles and quarrels may be exist because of a man.

Lacking enough information, evidence and relation; maxims of quantity, manner and relative are violated respectively.

*3-"Women's counsel is cold."*

One may wonder when he hears such a proverb; how could anybody describe a great entity like woman with such descriptions. The woman who gives life and stays up late many nights caring about her children. It is something unbelievable to understate her and judge her as unwise and can not give good opinions and thoughts. So, impoliteness strategies and style are found to a great extent. that leads to threat women face and diminish her being to reflect clear discrimination and humiliation against women.

The proverb judges all women generally without giving adequate information or proofs . In this way maxim of quantity and maxim of manner are deliberately violated to enhance the idea of insult for women.

**Arabic proverbs**

*1."A woman's belly is a garden with many kinds of fruit."*

Arab always tend to understate women in their literary works. This matter considers as part of their traditions. In this proverb one may see a picture of greedy creature who cares only about food. This picture implies impolite tigers and understate position for women. Women represent a complete entity full of wisdom, morality and intelligibility.

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Maxim of quality states that one must not say that for which he lacks adequate evidence so there is a violation for this maxim since this proverb give a general judgment without evidence. There is a kind of ambiguity concerning the relation between the women's belly and a garden which leads to the violation of manner maxim.

### 2. *"Flip the jar on its mouth, and the daughter comes out like her mother."*

To  make a strong link  between the daughter and her mother is a repeated theme in Arabic culture. In this proverb, this link reflects a negative connotation. It is often said when the daughter makes something bad ,so the  impolite tiger here will be  unjustly to the daughter and her mother .

Hence, this proverb  threatens the face of the daughter as well as her mother and diminish their position and entity in society.

In what way one can prove that each girl is like her mother. Definitely, no one can do that. Consequently, the maxim of quality is violated.

The maxim of relevance is also violated, since there is no direct relation between women and a jar.

### 3. *"Break a woman a rib, she will get twenty-four"*

This proverb represents a clear invitation to violence and the bad exploitation of power. It stands for the corruption of the building of society. The impolite tiger here threatens not only women face ,but all her existence. It is used to create a subservience generation of women who can not defend themselves or get their rights.

Such kinds of proverbs reduced implications out of the form of an utterance depending on the basis of certain co-operative principles, which direct and achieve the level of efficiency and normal acceptability of interaction. In this way , all Grice's maxims are violated to the same extent.

## CONCLUSION.

From what is explained above. It seems that most English and Arab proverbs contain a significant amount of scorn and impolite style and tigers towards women. To be more accurate , Arabic proverbs insult the women image more than English ones.

Two of Grice's maxims are , quality and relevance, appeared more than manner and quantity.

I think we need to exclude such proverbs from both cultures English and Arab in order to sustain the society form corruption.

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