A Sociolinguistics Study on Gender in Egyptian Arabic Proverbs

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Article Info	Abstract

This study discusses gender in Egyptian Arabic proverbs from a sociolinguistic point of view to see the correlation between language and socio-cultural Egyptian society. The research method used in this study is a combination of intralingual, extra lingual, hermeneutic, and correlational methods. Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that gender disclosure in Egyptian Arabic proverbs uses lingual units in the form of words and phrases. As for the meaning, the expression of gender in Egyptian Arabic uses a literal or actual meaning and a figurative meaning or a non-true meaning. The gender gap that appears in Egyptian Arabic proverbs is in the form of relationship gaps, roles in the family, and the construction of stereotypes of women as inferior and dependent figures. The gender gap reflected in the proverb is in accordance with the reality of the high level of gender inequality in Egypt. This reveals that there is a correlation between language and socio-cultural Egyptian society.

Penelitian ini membahas mengenai gender dalam peribahasa Arab Mesir ditinjau dari sudut pandang sosiolinguistik untuk melihat korelasi antara bahasa dan sosial budaya masyarakat Mesir. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini merupakan gabungan dari metode padan intralingual, padan ekstralingual, hermeneutik, dan korelasional. Berdasarkan hasil analisis diketahui bahwa pengungkapan gender dalam peribahasa Arab Mesir menggunakan satuan lingual berupa kata dan frasa. Adapun secara makna, pengungkapan gender dalam bahasa Arab Mesir menggunakan makna literal atau sebenarnya dan makna figuratif atau makna bukan sebenarnya. Kesenjangan gender yang muncul dalam peribahasa Arab Mesir berupa kesenjangan relasi, peran di keluarga, serta konstruksi pemberian stereotipe perempuan sebagai sosok inferior dan dependen. Kesenjangan gender yang tercermin dalam peribahasanya sesuai dengan realita tingginya tingkat kesenjangan gender di Mesir. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat korelasi antara bahasa dan sosial budaya masyarakat Mesir.

A. Introduction

Language is a speech to express and convey what they mean. As a tool to convey intentions or messages, language is influenced by the mindset and values of the speakers. Every formation of words and even sentences in a language can determine the nature or characteristics of thoughts in the culture of a nation[1]. This is in line with the Sapir-Whorf

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[1] Sibarani, Antropologi Linguistik (Medan: Penerbit Poda, 2004.) p. 61

hypothesis which states that language not only determines the pattern of culture, but also determines the way of thinking which then influences behavior. Thus, it is known that language reflects the mindset, values, and perspectives of a society[2].

One form of language that can reflect the mindset and culture in society is a proverb. Proverbs are sentences or fragments of sentences that have frozen their form, meaning and function in society; hereditary, used for counseling, teaching, living guidelines; includes thimbles, proverbs, and parables[3]. Functioning as a provider of advice, teaching, and living guidelines, proverb is a linguistic medium where the memory of wisdom, cultural history and civilization of a society is kept. In other words, to understand the mindset, perspective, and behavior of a society can be seen from the proverb that the community has.

Arab society is known as an eloquent and clever society in stringing words. This is indicated by the many proverbs born from Arabs. Arabic proverbs contain meanings that are full of the philosophy of life. Through proverbs, the way people perceive and respond to social phenomena is well recorded, including gender issues as social and cultural construction of the inherent nature of men and women.

Gender issues are defined as issues of inequities that negatively impact women and men. This issue is one of the crucial issues in the Middle East region. Based on the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum, it is known that Egypt, as one of the countries in the Middle East, is ranked 134th out of 144 countries. The rating indicates that Egypt is a country with a high level of gender inequality as reflected in its proverbs.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher considers that proverbs are one form of language that represents the mindset of a particular society. Through proverbs the position of men and women constructed by society can be known. Therefore, the issue of gender in Egyptian Arabic proverbs is the focus of this research. The choice of Arabic proverbs originating from Egypt is done because of the limitations of research and considering that Egypt has many references to this proverb. In addition, the high level of gender inequality in Egypt is a reinforcement of this research. It is expected that this study may add new insights related to gender issues in the Middle East countries and explain the relationship between the language of the social community that is reflected from its proverbs.

The study consisted of three phases, namely data collection techniques, data processing techniques, and presentation of the results of data analysis techniques. The data in this study is Egyptian Arabic proverbs that reveal gender. The Arabic Egyptian proverbs studied derive from linguistic texts in the dictionaries and encyclopedias: *Al-Amtsālu al-ʿĀmmiyyatu* a dictionary written by Ahmad Taimur, *Al-Mausū'tu adz-Dzahabiyyati li*

Amtsāli ad-Dunyā written by Thahā Su'ad and Walīd Nāshīf, and *Mausū'atu al-Amtsāli asy-Sya'biyyati al-Mishriyyati wa at-Ta'bīrāti as-Sā'irati* an encyclopedia of Egyptian Arabic proverbs by Ibrahim Achmad Sya'lān.

After determining the data source, the next step is collecting data. Data collection was carried out using the reading method, which is listening to the use of language. The process of collecting data based on the stages of use, it can be divided into two, namely basic techniques and advanced techniques.[4] The basic techniques used are tapping techniques and note-taking techniques as advanced techniques. Tapping techniques are done by tapping and tracing Egyptian Arabic proverbs that reveal gender in the data sources mentioned above. This tapping is then followed up with note-taking techniques, namely by recording data on the data card to be classified and sampled. After the classification, then data analysis is carried out.

In the process of data analysis, researchers used the intralingual identity method and the extra lingual identity method. This method is used to describe the Egyptian Arabic proverb which reveals gender issues. The last stage is the stage of presenting the results of data analysis. The presentation of the data is attempted to fulfill three principles, namely descriptive adequacy, explanatory adequacy, and exhaust adequacy[5]

B. Research Finding and Discussion

The theory used in this study is the theory of gender and sociolinguistic theory. Fakih in *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial* defines gender as an inherent nature of men and women who are socially and culturally constructed[6]. The concept of gender should be distinguished by sex or gender. Gender is a biologically determined division of human sex. This biological aspect includes differences in physical anatomy, composition of hormones in the body, reproduction, and other biological characteristics. The gender is generally used to identify differences between men and women from social, cultural, and other non-biological aspects.

In the discussion on gender, there are two schools of thought, namely the nurture theory and the nature theory. In addition to these two theories, there is a theory that is inspired by these two theories called equilibrium theory. Here is an explanation from Sasongko about the three theories[7]:

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[4] Sudaryanto, Metode Linguistik Bagian Kedua Metode dan Aneka Teknik Pengumpulan Data. (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1988) p. 2

[5] Subroto, Pengantar Metode Penelitian Linguistik Struktural. Cetakan Pertama. (Surakarta: Sebelas Maret University Press, 1992) p.92

Hadi "Kata-Kata Serapan dari Bahasa Arab yang Terdapat dalam Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia". Disertasi Program S3 Ilmu Sastra (Linguistik) Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2003. P. 77

[6] Fakih, Mansour. Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2013.) p.8

[7] Sasongko, Sri Sundari. Konsep dan Teori Gender (Jakarta: BKKBN, 2009) p. 16-21

1. According to the nurture theory, the difference between women and men is essentially the result of socio-cultural construction resulting in different roles and tasks. This difference causes women left behind and neglected their role and contribution in family life, community, nation, and state.

2. According to the theory of nature, the difference between women and men is nature so that it is irreversible and universal. This biological difference provides an indication and implication that between the two types have different roles and tasks. Humans, both women and men, have different natures according to their respective functions.

3. According to equilibrium theory, there is a compromise which is known as equilibrium which emphasizes the concept of partnership and harmony in the relationship between women and men. This view does not polarize between women and men because both must work together in partnership and harmony in family life, community, and nation.

Gender theory above is used to study more about the classification of relationships, roles, and gender stereotypes in Egypt. In addition to gender theory, sociolinguistics theory is also used to analyze Egyptian Arabic proverbs that reveal gender problems. This is because language and social reality are unity that cannot be separated from one another. The dynamics of language is never apart from the social context where language grows and develops.

Sociolinguistics attempt to explain the human ability to use the rules of language appropriately in varied situations. In sociolinguistics, language is not approached or seen as a language, as did structural linguistics, but is seen as a means of interaction in human society. Therefore, all sociolinguistic formulations are inseparable from the problem of language relations with activities or social aspects as well as culture.

Regarding the relationship between language and culture, there are two categories which are extracted from the opinions of experts, namely subordinative and coordinative relationships. According to Koentjaraningrat language is part of culture, or in other words language is under the sphere of culture. Koentjaraningrat's opinion reveals that language and culture have a subordinate relationship. The coordinative relationship believes that the relationship between language and culture is equal[8].

Regarding coordinative language and culture relationships, there are two things that need attention. First, opinions about language and culture such as the relationship between one side of one with the other on a coin. Both are different phenomena, but the relationship is very close and inseparable. Second, the opinions or hypotheses of the two linguistic experts, namely Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, which are then known as the Sapir-

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[8] Chaer, Op.Cit., 165.

Whorf hypothesis or language relativity. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis says that there is a strong relationship between the language, culture, and mind of a speaker[9]. In the language process, a person's culture greatly influences the language used in daily communication. Culture is controlled and simultaneously controls language. It is then underlying the notion that relations coordinative between language and culture are equal.

1. **Gender Expression in Egyptian Arabic Proverbs**

The result of the analysis on the expression of gender in Egyptian Arabic proverbs reveals that linguistic units used are words and phrases. Two types of words that reveal gender issues, namely *ism* (noun) and *fi'l* (verb). The phrases that reveal gender issues can be seen in the following proverb.

<div dir="rtl">

مَرَاة الْأَبْ سُخْطَةٌ مِنَ الرَّبْ

</div>

'The stepmother is a curse from God' (Taimur, 2014:542).

In the proverb there are phrases مراة الاب 'stepmother'. The phrase is a nominal phrase because it is formed from two words whose core elements are nouns or nouns, namely مراة 'female' nouns and الأب 'paternal nouns. The phrase مراة الاب 'woman father 'has another meaning, namely' stepmother 'which the writer then chooses to translate and interpret the phrase. This phrase reveals gender issues, which are related to the social status of society, roles, and gender stereotypes. In community life, stepmother has a separate status and role, namely as a wife of a father and a mother. Taimūr explained that Egyptian society has a bad stereotype towards stepmothers because they are considered to have evil behaviour and do not love their stepchildren so that they are called the curse of God[10].

As for the meaning, the expressions of gender in Egyptian Arabic proverb contain literal meaning and figurative meaning. Literal meaning means what it says, while figurative meaning is a meaning that is not literal; the meaning used is not the meaning of the word or phrase itself, but a different meaning implied by it. Here is an example of an Egyptian Arabic proverb that uses figurative meaning to express gender issues.

<div dir="rtl">

إِنْ كَانَ الرَّاجِلْ بَحْرْ تَكُونِ الْمَرَةْ جِسْرْ

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'If a man becomes a sea, then a woman is the cliff' (Taimur, 2014:138).

In the proverb above there is the word بحر 'sea' to refer to men and جسر 'cliff' to refer to women. The word بحر 'sea' is used to allegorize properties when angry men who like big choppy seas and strong winds. The word جسر 'cliff' is used for women who have been allegorized by seaside cliffs, or breakwater rocks at the seaside. The purpose of

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[9] Chaer, Op.Cit., 166.

[10] Taimūr, Al-Amtsālu al-'Āmmiyyatu. (Kairo: Dār asy-Syurūq. 2014) p. 542

bluffing a cliff with a woman is that if a man is angry, then a woman must be able to become like a cliff that breaks waves, a woman must be able to relieve a man's anger[11]. These proverbs use figurative language to describe men and women that are included in the maxim that use figurative meaning.

2. Gender Classification of Relations, Roles, and Stereotypes

Egyptian Arabic proverbs that reveal gender form a relationship and gender role in the family. In addition, there are also stereotypes that develop in society towards women and men. Gender relations and roles create a dichotomy between boys and girls, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives. As for stereotypes in society there is also a dichotomy that superior and independent men, while women are inferior and dependent. The following is an example of a proverb which reveals that Egyptian women have a limited role and have inferior stereotypes.

اللي تخرج من دارها ينقل مقدارها

'Woman who came out of her house, changed her value' (Taimur, 2014:69).

The proverb above reveals that a wife who comes out of her house is considered to change in value. That is, a wife is considered not good when outside the home[12]. This proverb limits the movement of women to do work in public areas. This proverb shows that Egyptian women experience domestication because a wife is seen as honourable when in a house or in a domestic area. The phenomenon and reality of domestic roles imposed on women finally embodies the concept of 'domestication' of women in society. This concept, if observed, tends to be discriminatory for women in their representation[13]

In contrast to women, men in Egypt have a broad role and are stereotyped as powerful figures. This is expressed in the following proverb.

ضِلَّ رَاجِلْ وَلَا ضِلَّ حَيْطْ

'A man's shadow is better than a wall shadow' (Taimur, 2014:367).

The proverb above reveals that the shadow of men is better than the shadow of the wall. Taimur explains the meaning of this proverb is that for a woman it is better to have a man than not to have it at all[14]. The presence of men is considered important so that women are considered unable to do many things without it. This shows that stereotypes of men are

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[11] Ibid., 138

[12] Ibid., 69

[13] Kasiyan, *Manipulasi dan Dehumanisasi Perempuan dalam Iklan.* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2008) p. 56-57

[14] Taimur, Op.Cit. 367

superior. This stereotype is attached to Egyptian men because Egyptian society adheres to a patriarchal system that makes men the centre of everything.

3. Correlation between Proverbs and Social Cultural Life

In an analysis of Egyptian Arabic proverbs conducted in this study, it was found that there was a gender gap in Egyptian society. These gender gaps arise from the division of relations and the unbalanced role between men and women. The dichotomy that women for domestic and male areas for public areas in Egyptian Arabic proverbs is one of the proofs of a gender gap in Egyptian society. Stereotypes of women who are more negative than men in the Arabic Egyptian proverb also reflect that there is a gender gap in Egyptian society. Here are some examples of Egyptian proverbs that reveal the gender gap.

إِنْ كَانْ لِسَانُ الْمَرَة جَهَرْ إِقْطَعْهُ

'If a woman's voice is loud, then cut her tongue' (Sya'lan, 2002:176).

The proverb above explains that women do not have the right to express their opinion. If a woman dares to express her opinion out loud, then cut off her tongue. The purpose of cutting a woman's tongue is to silence all the opinions she speaks. This proverb revals that women's rights as human beings who are free to express their opinions are limited. The gender gap is clearly visible in this proverb because women do not have the freedom to express their opinions like men. The same thing is expressed in the following proverb.

اسمع للمرة ولا تأخذ برأيها

'Listen to women, but don't take their opinion!' (Su'ad and Nāshif, 2008:98).

The proverb above explains that women may have certain opinions or ideas, but men do not have to use their opinions as a reference. This, of course, is a reflection of the gender gap in society that ignores women's opinions. This proverb belittles women by thinking that their opinions are completely unimportant and unworthy of being heard. The results of this study are in line with the theory of Sapir and Whorf. Egyptian Arabic proverbs that express gender not only illustrate Egyptian society's perception of gender, but also determine and shape how the roles, positions and tasks divide between men and women in a society.

Based on the results of the study, it is known that Egyptian Arabic proverbs that discuss gender have a relationship with each other in the culture of Egyptian society and their relations are equal or equal. The gender gap seen in his service is in line with the reality of the Egyptian society whose level of gender gap is high. Gender dynamics that are reflected in his service are also in line with the reality of Egyptian society that continues

to change. This shows that the language and social culture of the community are interrelated with each other and there is a coordinative relationship.

C. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis of gender disclosures in Egyptian Arabic proverbs it is known that in the disclosure of the lingual units used are words and phrases. As for meaning, gender disclosure in Arabic uses literal meaning and figurative meaning. The literal meaning is the real meaning, while the figurative meaning is not the actual meaning.

Egyptian Arabic proverbs that reveal gender are associated with the patriarchal system in Egypt forming a relationship and role in the family. In addition, there are also stereotypes that develop in society towards women and men. Gender relations and roles make a dichotomy between boys and girls, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives. As for stereotypes in society there is also a dichotomy that superior and independent men, while women are inferior and dependent.

Proverbs reflect a society. Egyptian Arabic proverbs not only portray Egyptian society's perception of gender, but also determine and shape how gender is in a society. Both influence each other. The gender gap seen in his service is in line with the reality of the Egyptian society whose level of gender gap is high. Gender dynamics that are reflected in his service are also in line with the reality of Egyptian society that continues to change. This shows that the language and social culture of the community are interrelated with each other and there is a coordinative relationship.

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