



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Analyzing Pragmatic Markers of Gender and Power in James Joyce's *Araby*

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Ghulam Mujtaba Yasir, <sup>2</sup>Uzma Safdar\* and <sup>3</sup>Kanwal Fatima

1. Associate Professor of English, Govt. Graduate College Block 17. D G. khan, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Visiting faculty, FAST NU & LUMS, Department of Sciences and Humanities, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
3. BS Scholar, Department of English Literature and Linguistics, Ghazi University Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan

\*Corresponding Author | uzmasafdarazeem@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to investigate the pragmatic markers in James Joyce's *Araby* in connection with language and power. This pragmatic analysis explores the speech acts, and inferred meaning when the protagonist of the play interacts with other characters. Analysis reveals the protagonist's youthful idealism as a result of the immediacy of conveyed information and socially constructed notions of gender. The study reveals how requests, directives and refusals are used in communicating power relations. The study also analyses how these pragmatic markers facilitate disillusionment of the hero and how Joyce framed the problem of perverted desires, power and established norms. This reading of *Araby* as a pragmatic study of communication as a social accomplishment provides a powerful appreciation of how language is used as a resource not only for symbolic interaction but also for manipulation of the gendered power dynamics in the story's social setting.

**KEYWORDS** Araby, Gender and Power, James Joyce, Pragmatic Markers

## Introduction

*Araby*, by James Joyce first appeared in 1914 as part of the *Dubliners* collection showcasing the struggles, eysties of youth and the bitterness of life and love. Despite the number of studies that engaged the novel from the perspective of one or other theoretical approaches, the analysis of the power relations and gender aspects of the story has not been addressed enough form the pragmatic perspective. There is another science, pragmatics, which studies how language is used and gives ideas on how characters' words and relations indicate social status and authority, especially gender one (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 2001).

In *Mangan's sister*, however, the protagonist's behavior is characterised by power struggle, influenced by gender conventions and sexuality. By employing language, Joyce develops a word where the young hero's romanticist illusions are restrained by the gender-related roles, and other conventions characteristic of the Ireland of the early 20th century. For Goffman (1959) politeness strategies act as an intervening variable in the manner in which face is managed in interpersonal communication. In *Araby* the mannerisms and way through which characters interact with one another in the course of the novel can be analyzed using face-threatening acts and politeness.

The theme that is well represented in *Araby* is Gender as is evident with most of Joyce's works. The nature of the relationship that the protagonist has with *Mangan's sister*

is that he has a one-sided affection towards her because he has idealized her through his words, as well as through the way that society expects women to behave during that time period. Holmes (2001) noted that gendered communication entails power in which politeness or directness is used in signaling how power relations in a relationship. In addition, straightforward observable elements like requests, directives, and refusals are not just about power and gender in context free communication (Lakoff, 1975).

Although there exists a plethora of studies addressing pragmatics of Joyce's *Araby*, the program of studying gender constructions through the prism of power resources has not been fully elaborated. This study aims to address this research gap by, thus proposing a pragmatic analysis of speech act and politeness strategies within the story; preferably with special reference to power relations, and gender stereotypes as manifest in the characters' episodes.

While critics have dedicated much consideration to the themes of *Araby* as an idealistic, disillusioned and socio-critically grounded narrative, the pragmatic elements of the novella and the way in which they are presented – the gender and power dynamics in the text, manifested through language – has been largely overlooked in the body of scholarship on this work. The relationships of the protagonist with Mangan junior's sister, and with other characters, expose and interrogate gender relations and patriarchy inherent in language use. Finally through the pragmatic markers such as speech acts, politeness strategies and indirectness this study aims at revealing how Joyce aspire to otherness and subordination through language especially in gender domain. A dearth of a particularly coherent pragmatic analysis of gender and power makes the interpretation of *Araby* a good arena to discuss how the principal characters in the tale of Joyce use language as a means of resistance and submission on the way to disappointment. According to Schiffrin (1987), discourse markers, a type of pragmatic markers, help manage coherence in both spoken and written texts, including short stories.

### **Literature Review**

Pragmatic markers play a critical role in shaping the implicit meaning of dialogues and narrative flow in short fiction (Aijmer, 2013). The powerful investigation of the concepts of gender and power in relation to literature has traditionally been closely linked with the study of language and communication. An analysis of language use based on the start which is pragmatic does provide a useful framework for analyzing power relations within characters and their interactions portray power dynamics within society. In the case of James Joyce's *Araby*, pragmatics will establish how the use of language.

Feminism literary analysis has commonly focused on analyzing how language prints or constructs power relations. Lakoff, in the work of 1975, noted that women are bomb to use language which is consistent with other polite and obedient, this consequently causing women to use speech that is subordinated. Both these gendered expectations define the given types of communication and how the characters'/protagonists' power within the narratives are constructed. The sexual contact the protagonist has with Mangan's sister through a letter, which is the major part of the interaction between the two, may be analyzed in terms of the gendered language. The protagonist's language shows his passion and desire for his beloved, but his working class, unsophisticated nature, and social and emotional isolation under the stranglehold of masculine codes of early twentieth-century Dublin.

Holmes (2001) thus draws from Lakoff and continues to discuss politeness strategies, with particular reference to how people modify their language use in order to

support face and power. These strategies are important when approaching Araby because Joyce composes interactions which demonstrate subtle oppression of the protagonist by the people around him. The protagonist does not even wish to talk about it directly to Mangan's sister; moreover, he never speaks to her himself, which is another sign of his failure due to his helplessness enhanced by his young age and, what is more important, gender. According to Holmes in such context, the performance of indirect speech act is associated with the perceived loss of power and positioning of the protagonist as inferior in the gendered hierarchy.

Speech act theory which is a sub-theory of pragmatics defines how communication works apart from its face value. Searle (1969) notes that speech acts are phrases or statements that comments on an action; they make a request, provides an assertion, a quest and declare a command. In Araby, there is a lot of pent up emotion and social desires represented in what the protagonist says. But his inability to openly express his needs – let alone to act on behalf of his desire towards Mangan's sister shows his feeling of powerlessness and subordinate to the values that emerged in the society and in particular, to the masculine gender role of the late 19th century. For instance, his reluctance to speak with Mangan's sister and his inability to fulfill his word about the gift that he would purchase from the bazaar are the basic speech acts in which the struggles between his individuality and the forces precisely define themselves.

One was able to notice that the use of indirect speech acts is also incorporated into the plot. According to Goffman (1959), language does not only provide informative function but also function in 'face,' which is in fact social image. In Araby, the protagonist's interactions are minimal and the subtlety a major feature; instead of arguing with Mangan's sister, for instance, the protagonist makes use of implications instead of confrontational words. Such an indirect approach can be explained by the desire to retain face to face with the power relations; the protagonist never says 'I love you', first, because he is unsure of this feeling and, second, because he does not want to be rejected.

### **Etiquette and Power Dynamics**

A surprising finding about politeness strategies in Araby is that they reveal the actual dominance-submission dynamical paradigm for the relationships between the characters, and in particular, between the protagonist and Mangan's sister. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that politeness plans on how to fulfill social relationships and minimise FTAs especially in cases of power relations. More explicitly, the polite narrative which the protagonist of Araby uses can be interpreted as submission, as a way to avoid conflict or rejection. Mangan's sister though does not directly engage in the speech acts of the protagonist manages to influence the discourse by her nonproductive talk or simply nodding her head which adds to the gross disparity of power relations between the two.

One would also appreciate that sex plays a crucial part in the application of politeness strategies. From Holmes (2001) it is clear that men rely on more direct and assertive language, which women are supposed to do because they are subordinate to men in framed gendered power relations. The protagonist's sister from Araby seems to parrot limited phrases but her obedience corresponds to the aesthetics of female muted submissiveness, and hence, keeps rigorously defining the male protagonist's domains of actions and speech. Their inability to escape these limits serves to portray the protagonist's disillusionment regarding both the great ideal he chose as his goal and the society that does not allow him to attain this goal.

## **Pragmatics in Disillusion and Power**

Araby, the story's climax in which, the protagonist discovers his disappointment at the bazaar, can also be addressed in pragmatic terms. Speech acts in the last scenes of the story: power relations. These lusters of the jealous man's inner dialogues prove his new sensibility to his own political emasculation and the false optimism which has driven his passions. The fact that his quest for love would amount to nothing shows that the mythos of power he projected onto Mangan's sister, and the bazaar, has crumbled.

## **Material and Methods**

Thus, the present research uses a qualitative research approach; the analysis of the linguistic components of James Joyce's *Araby* is primarily based on a pragmatic consideration. The principal research objective is to study the pragmatic aspect of both gender and power in terms of speech acts, politeness, and implication through the actions of the protagonist and the other characters. The first part of the *Araby* analysis is the textual explication of dialogs and soliloquies in which the protagonist communicated with Mangan's sister and the other characters. That is why it is necessary to highlight the most significant aspects of linguistic features comprising in specific types of requests as production patterns: speech acts (requests, assertions, directives), politeness strategies (mitigation, hedging), and indirectness (implicature, presupposition). To organise and analyse different types of speech acts used in the text, this study uses Searle's (1969) speech act theory. These consist of assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations, by analyzing how the use of speech acts proves the disparity on power between the characters and indeed sexism between the genders. The reactions of the protagonist's to Mangan's sister was also explored, this is because his language choice mirrors or violates the societal expectations of the male gender. The study focused on whether and how hints, suggestions and omissions features of indirect speech acts adjust to face and tolerate dynamic in the given power relationship between the protagonist and Mangan's sister. Drawing from Goffman (1959) notions of face the nature of submissive communication in relation to power and regulation in the allocated text shall be examined.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theory on which this research is based is pragmatics: speech act theory, politeness theory, and the notion of 'face'. These frameworks provide important means of understanding the depathologized connection between language, power, and gender in *Araby*. Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969) is utilized as it illuminates on how utterances in *Araby* do are not circumvented by the notions of pragmatic richness. Categorizing speech acts (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations) the research will investigate how the characters' language presents their societal positions, motives, and relationship hierarchy. The use of the indirect speech uttered by the protagonist and above all, in his confrontation with Mangan's sister will be discussed in terms of the relationships of power constructed in and through speech acts.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section of this paper includes data analysis and textual examples.

In this section, textual examples of gender and power and the gramiralization of the pragmatic markers of these aspects in James Joyce's *Araby* are identified and interpreted. The examples will include: speech acts; politeness strategies; indirection; face management or at least concerns with the face of the other participant involved, which will

be between Mangan's protagonist and Mangan's sister. They would also wish to know how these linguistic features depict power relations influenced by gender and social relations.

### Speech Acts and Power Dynamics

All of his relations with Mangan's sister are delivered in a passive manner; he stammers and cannot make a direct action towards her, which suggests that he has accepted the subordinate gendered role.

**Example 1:** *"I watched my chance and spoke to her. 'I will go to the bazaar to-night,' I said."* (Araby, Joyce)

The speech act here is of a direct declarative but is interesting vis-à-vis the relations of power between the protagonist and Mangan's sister. Thus, by formulating the sentence as a statement and not as a request or the direct statement of the feelings the protagonist completely discards any power aspect. By "the declarative" is implied a rather passived stance in the interaction, concerning himself with whether he had the right to call Mangan's sister. This indirectness is due to his adoration and the societal constructed Castration anxiety between him and her. He despises himself because of the conformity to the male and polite ways of a man who cannot say what he wants so straight. In addition, the statement is not about his actions toward her at that moment, but his intention to go to the bazaar in the next morning. It might do so as a manifestation of his impotence to command the present.

### Politeness Strategies and Gender Expectations

A politeness approach reveals politeness strategies that apply to gendered language in relation to power relations between the protagonist and Mangan's sister in Araby. Brown and Levinson in their politeness theory, which we'll be using in this paper have subdivided politeness into positive and negative politeness. The first type of politeness, positive politeness, is characterized in terms of expressing a closeness or solidarity with the other party and the second type, negative politeness, is characterized by the aim of avoiding impositions on the other party. In this case the protagonist uses features of both positive and negative politeness and it all shows his position as a man in a patriarchal society.

**Example 2:** *"I had to wait in the hall. The light from the lamp was on the other side of the room and I could not see the faces of the people who were talking."* (Araby, Joyce)

The remarkably weak and passive individual that is also the protagonist is brought out here through the negative politeness strategy of mitigation. He does not even try to assert himself or try and make a request by saying: 'Can you help me?' Instead, the language path emphasizes his passiveness 'I had to wait.' His lack of interactivity is well demonstrated by where he places the light source – on the opposite side of the room – literally and symbolically leaving him outside the main arena of activity. This remains in line with the gender related stereotype of events this character is portrayed as a fellow who cannot do anything until he is granted permission presumably by Mangan's sister, or by society. This refusal to occupy space or to state his authority also draws further limits on his social and gendered agency.

## Indirect Communication and Implicature

Meatalization is important for deciphering the manner in which the protagonist addresses and deals with the issue of power relation in relation to gender in Araby. Mr. Okuma often engages in relational communication, which means he does not communicate directly to avoid jeopardizing people's face which is common among gendered communication.

**Example 3:** *"I seemed to see her, I seemed to see her walking toward me, but I was afraid to ask her for any information."* (Araby, Joyce)

This is an indirect and symbolic call to Mangan's sister which shows the protagonist's emotional and social awkwardness. Now "seemed to see" means that there is this big gap between how he thought of her and how he saw her in person. When say "afraid to ask her for any information" it seems a man means they are in continuing power relationship with this woman. That he failed to start a direct conversation shows that he also knows his position is less than her – in terms of gender, age, and social class. He says he does not want to disturb her, by doing so he does not have to face his unpleasant situation. This use of indirectness also points to the main character's lack of knowledge about how to advance his wants or earn dominance through proper male behavior during the time of Dublin with females with perfect manners.

## Face Management and Gendered Power

Face as defined by Goffman (1959) encompasses impression that people create in interaction. Motivation and conflict that distort the protagonist's "face" in Araby, the opposition of the protagonist's dream of Mangan's sister and his failure to approach her. It is for such reasons that he is indirect, polite to her: due to face loss feelings such as embarrassment, failure, and the likes.

**Example 4:** *"I knew that the two of us were in the same room, but I had to wait until she left the room."* (Araby, Joyce)

The protagonist's intention to remain silent until Mangan's sister leaves the room proves his concern with what he calls "face." This way, he tries to buffer himself from any rejection or embarrassment that may be involved with her. Subduing the nonentity to himself, he becomes too embarrassed to assert himself into the audience because he is worthless in the patriarchal structure of the world. The social norms on male and female behavior make him unable to directly show desire which is considered as arrogance or intrusion in her affairs. He chooses to be dormant, which maintains the oppressive relationship between him and Mangan's sister.

## Disillusionment and the Collapse of Idealized Power

The de-idealization itself unfolds throughout the entire story to be paralleled by change in actions and words of the protagonist, including the manner in which he spoke of the bazaar and Mangan's sister.

**Example 5:** *"I went into the bazaar, but the place was dark, and no one seemed to care about me."* (Araby, Joyce)

In change, one notes the progression of the disillusionment of his protagonist in language which is more direct and therefore, will resigning. From the ideal to the passive type to disappointed type of writing – it is evident that he realizes the helplessness that has

ruled his dealings. The old bazaar, which probably has once symbolized men's romantic and idealistic dreams, turns into the place of disillusionment. The man was left with nobody in his life that cared about him, which was evident by the words he used, no one seemed to care about me. Persistence of power relations is also rampant throughout the movie. This time depicts the protagonist as a victim since he was aware that his dreams based on what was expected of him as a man were out of reach.

Exploring the pragmatic markers of gender and power in *Araby* we can see how the actions and feelings of the protagonist are far from being free from gendered roles, power relations within society expected by the culture. The disillusionment of the protagonist at the end of the story is not only just because of the romantic failure of the hero but also social awakening from the strong grip of male dominancy and male dominated social structure and tradition of the society.

### **Discussion**

It could be concluded that taking the pragmatic markers of gender and power in the story from James Joyce's *Araby*, one would realize how language and gender as well as power interact and dominate an individual. In speech acts by the protagonist, politeness strategies, indirect communication, face management, we see how gendered patterns of power control over self and others. Doing so, the study also highlights that while the linguistic choices are to some extent the result of individual desire, they are also conditioned by the social and gendered Rules which in turn define the character's agency and consciousness.

One of the key concerns that emerge in this analysis is related to the ways in which the protagonist's speech acts index power relations of gender in *Araby*. In replying to Mangan's sister, the protagonist frequently overuses overt polite words, stutters, makes very many attempts to speak, but does not openly utter his intentions. For instance, his cautious affirmation utterance, 'I, will, go to the bazaar to-night,' shows how he does not take an active part in the conversation. This kind of dialogue raises the theme of the abuses of power between the protagonist and Mangan's sister and the protagonist's lack of confidence in directly talking to her. This finding can be attributed to the feminist theory amidst communication purists which asserts that while the male and the female are different in communication, males are aggressively communicative in patriarchal contexts than the females who are always passive (Lakoff, 1975, p 24). The protagonist uses an unsophisticated English that in its vague and tentative expressions, corresponds to the man's subordinate position in this societal model.

Besides, the protagonist's inadequacy to express dominion and passion is a witnessed in his failure to directly inquire reprieve from Mangan's sister. This can be attributed to the fact that he never wants to be directly rude and this act is a face-threatening act (Goffman, 1959) besides he is aware of the roles that are ascribed to his status. Not only does this indirectness continue to underscore his emasculation, but it also accurately depicts the politeness regimes and social etiquette in the early twentieth-century Dublin especially as depicted between men and women.

The second discovery derived from the analysis is the employment of politeness strategies with detailed emphasis on negative politeness to manage the asymmetrical relationship between the protagonist and Mangan's sister. Why people say what they do is embodied in the speech of the protagonist of the story through analyzing negative politeness which is characterized by avoiding imposition and showing respect to the other person's territory. His inability to approach her directly and to use strong words is a

manifestation of the two major concerns that men needed to consider when it comes to interaction with women: they shouldn't be too aggressive or too forward.

It is face-threatening acts that concern the protagonist that forms the basis of the analysis of politeness in the story. Taking the Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), it is established that people employ politeness measures in order to navigate social relations, and power. In *Araby*, the protagonist is very much conscious of how he's been managing his affairs that seem to be sexually related to Mangan's sister; he uses disguised ways of asking her out so that no way will he be embarrassed or rejected by the girl he admires. This is evidence of not only the protagonist's social conditioning regarding gender appropriate behavior, but also the cultural mandate that men should remain separated from women, especially in matters of passion. Through the use of the indirect speech, the protagonist maintains the face of the self and Mangan's sister and relates to the existing gender power relations.

That the protagonist uses an intermediate to communicate with Mangan's sister is a particularly defining characteristic of his sexually assigned part in his modern society. His reluctance to talk to her and shy away from one on one confrontation is because he feels that he is in a weaker position to her. Thus, the direct reference and indirect speech can be considered as depersonalized and geared to rational interpretation, whereas indirect speech acts like hints or omissions act as a way of functioning in the given oppressive power structure and of reproducing social harmony. This is most clearly illustrated by his experiences at the bazaar, as he is overwhelmed by the social interactions, and is unable to successfully navigate the situation in order to get what he wants.

Another measure of how internal desire conflicts with external social reality is the degree of indirectness that the protagonist displays: the way he withdraws emotionally throughout the story and especially during the portions of the story where he actually interacts with other people. His intention to speak directly to Mangan's sister is frustrated by his shyness and sexual libido, as well as his view of the world as a male chauvinistic man of that time. In the last scene in the bazaar his failure to attain a romantic goal corresponds to his new understanding of how power relations in the society and masculinity specifically limits his agency. This disillusionment is indeed as a result of his realization that besides the girlfriend he has constructed being unrealistic she is further governed by social parameters that otherwise deny him mastery over her.

Addressing the concept of face is most important in relation to the protagonist of *Araby*; his loss of facest primarily for comprehending his emotional trajectory and disappointment. It is from a Goffman's (1959) notion of 'face' as a social persona one can better understand the protagonist's decision to avoid direct contact with Mangan's sister and, subsequently, his lack of success at the bazaar. Indirectness might be explained as an attempt to save his face throughout the story as the protagonist seems to be aware of expectations regarding his relations with Mangan's sister. Egocentricity rises high when he must uphold a certain image in front of her and even in front of himself to regain the view that he had once wanted to pursue her.

The bazaar presents the last component of the protagonist's environment; his face is fully shattered only in the moment when he comes face to face with the reality of the setting. The sense of the main character's emasculation in this scene is the direct consequence of his inability to establish his personal self and want during the rest of the film. This change from indirect speech to the individual self--calling into question at the end of the story speaks to a crisis in the protagonists, which results from recognizing that his own oppressive obstacles were projected by himself because of the practiced gender



and societal dominance. Studies have shown that pragmatic markers can indicate shifts in narrative perspective and emphasize cultural nuances in short fiction (Andersen, 2001).

## **Conclusion**

This research has used speech acts, politeness strategies, indirect communication, and face management to analyse the pragmatic markers of gender and power in James Joyce's *Araby*. The visit of the protagonist with Mangan's sister, and further his trip to the bazaar also points to how language is a great tool of communication in a much broader social context, as well as a way to construct and perpetuate gender roles. The protagonist in this study was reluctant, spoke in roundabout ways, and took 'face' into consideration. Based on these findings, and for all participants, it was seen that there was a structure to sexuality within which people operate, a structure given by culture where gender roles determine how persons express desires, handle relations, and negotiate power.

According to the pragmatic theories of Brown and Levinson (1987) on politeness and Goffman (1959) the most dominant mask, the behavior of the protagonist and his inability to be assertive and emotional compliant, draws our attention to the political subjugation of the male figure as a subsuming position in the gendered hegemonic city of Dublin in early twentieth century. Despite presenting himself as an empowered man, he still exemplifies speech acts informing the audience increase passivity and indirectness in expressing themselves when confined to romantically desirable roles; thus, the gender roles apparent in society are a barrier to male autonomy.

Thus the protagonist's final disillusionment at the bazaar signifies not an individualist construction of romance as undesirable but a socio-postcolonial construction of the self which is constituted not only by gendered power relations but by desire as well. Identifying these pragmatic markers, this research demonstrates how Joyce's *Araby* is about the role of language as a tool of power and subordination constructing the gender relations and employing linguistic strategies to perpetuate domination or fight against it.

Analysis of pragmatic markers in *Araby* contributes to the expanded understanding of Joyce's depiction of gender and power relations. It underscores the importance of language not just as a passive mirror of the social relations, but as a means of constituting social reality, and it casts a further light on the way in which whatever form language takes, it has the capacity to act simultaneously as a conduit for and as a constraint on identity. It adds to the literature on pragmatics in literature and expands the possibility of how pragmatics approaches can be used to study the dynamics of power in literary texts.

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