

Linguistic Aspects of Emotional Language in Feminist Poetry

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***Abstract..** Women have been fighting for their independence, social or political equality for already centuries. As their rights and freedom were always declined and despised, they were considered as an inferior and minor part of the society. Misogyny and oppression towards women raised thousands of voices and the unity of the same purpose led it to the longest movement of feminism in history. Feminism is a gamut of socio-political movements and ideologies that share a common goal to delineate, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes (Srivastava 2017). Linguistic abstraction is a subtle way in which women are perceived as less favorable and which causes them to become subject to gender discrimination, despite that those causing it are often unaware that they are doing so and are, in turn, unintentionally being gender biased towards women (Garnica 2020). Therefore, gender brought back some linguistic questions about how language, culture and thought interact, we find that freedom of speech is mostly found in verse, not in prose. Consequently, the goal of our research is to make a linguistic study of emotional language in Feminist poetry. Our study is based on selected poems by feminist women poets (Maya Angelou and Sylvia Plath); isomorphisms and allomorphisms are outlined; the writing style and linguistics characteristics are determined. the emotional language of these poets is extremely noteworthy.*

***Key words:** linguistics, linguistic aspects, Sylvia Plath, Maya Angelou, feminism, oppression*

Introduction

Women have been fighting for protecting their social and political equality for already centuries. As their rights and freedom were always declined and despised, they were considered as an inferior and minor part of the society. Misogyny and oppression towards women raised thousands of voices and the unity of the same purpose led it to the longest movement of feminism in history. Misogyny exists at different levels within societies and is perpetuated through different mediums. The word itself has been defined by lots of psychologists as a hatred towards women manifested in various forms such as gender discrimination, patriarchy and male privilege, sexual harassment, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification. Etymology of the term is quite interesting,

as the roots of misogyny can be traced back to ancient Greek mythology (Srivastava, et.al. 2017; Berenger, 2020: 2).

There exist different definitions of *Feminism*, though in most dictionaries it is defined as a doctrine that aims to improve the position of women in society. According to the definition of Britannica feminism is the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes.

Feminism is considered as a gamut of socio-political movements and ideologies that share a common goal to establish and achieve socio-economic and political equality of sexes. Feminist movements have always campaigned for women rights to vote, to work, to earn fair wages or equal pay, to own their own property, to get education, to sign contracts, to have equal rights in family, and to have maternity leave. Feminists have also worked and fought to promote their bodily autonomy and integrity, to protect women and girls from savage crimes such as rape, sexual harassment, and family violence (Srivastava and others 2017).

After development of different waves of feminism, consequently starts gender studies and, nowadays, studying gender-related language is increasingly popular and it is considered as an interdisciplinary field of research that studies varieties of [speech](#) in terms of [gender](#). Gender studies are an integral part of this interdisciplinary movement that offers theoretical and methodological advantages in understanding multiply constituted social worlds and addressing global problems and also issues of gender and sex. The field of study and research draws upon the tradition of women's studies and feminist theories and activism. Gender awareness has become integral to disciplinary fields as diverse as history, literature, science, sociology and economics, as well as emerging as a field of studies, which goes further than the mainstreaming of gender (Woodward, 2015).

Taking linguistic action and responsibility for sexism within language could improve women's social advancement as well as be a key to liberating them within sexist linguistic domains, since sexism in language places certain restrictions on women and their perception within society (Berenger 2020: 2).

According to most of the scholars, freedoms of speech and word have been traditionally sanctioned more in verse, than in prose (Koupal 2014; Leech 1991:17; and et.al). From many different viewpoints, they argue that language - and more generally, discourse shapes gender identities and relations. Besides scholars, ordinary people always mention that language figures prominently in gender discussions.

The investigation of poetic language cannot proceed very far unless we have some notion of the relation between the kind of language which occurs in poetry, and other kind of language. Here, if anyone, we would expect linguistics, as the study of language and general, to help; for this subject matter of linguistics is all language - language as used not only in literary composition, but in everyday speech in scientific reports, in commercial and political persuasion, and in multitude of other more or less mundane functions. Critical language may violate or deviate from the generally observed rules of the language in many different ways, some obvious, some subtle. Both the means of and motives for deviation are worth of careful study. The creative writer and more particularly the poet, enjoys a unique freedom, amongst

users of the language, to range over all its communicative resources, without respect to the social and historical context to which they belong. Most of what is considered characteristic of literary language (for example, the use of tropes like irony and metaphor) nevertheless has its roots in everyday uses of language, and can best be studied with some reference to these users (Leech 1991: 5-6).

Content

The article deals with the linguistic study of emotional language in feminist poetry based on selected works by feminist poets Maya Angelou and Sylvia Plath. It is without question that throughout history, lots of women have influenced the English literature and the works of the poets contribute to the progression of poetry even today. Even though Sylvia Plath and Maya Angelou belong to different periods, they have something in common. It should be mentioned that they have lots of similarities in writing style and both of them have the same powerful message to women. Both of the poets had difficult periods in their lives they had to overcome many difficulties.

Sylvia Plath is one of the brightest and talented persons English literature has ever had. She is an American poet, novelist and short story writer born to a German father and American-Austrian mother. From her work, we could identify that she had a very complex life growing up. Most of Plath's works reveal her own troubles and internal battles she was fighting to. For lots of people, her style of writing sounded negative and daunting; it is natural that many of us are unable to comprehend the profundity of the life she was leading. Plath's work was critical in what it later evolved as a genre called Confessional poetry.

The way Sylvia Plath depicts her struggles on depression is the fascinating and touching. In a society, even in today's time, it is challenging to make people understand the seriousness of mental illness, it takes the greatest courage coupled with sheer brilliance to create this beautiful piece of work.

Maya Angelou, an acclaimed American poet, storyteller, activist, and autobiographer was born Marguerite Johnson in St. Louis, Missouri. A phenomenal woman by herself who has performed exceptionally in all walks of life, Angelou leads as an example. Her writing style is insanely empowering and motivating. She is a warrior who has fought all the odds in her life. Her life wasn't easy with her traumatic childhood, when she was sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend. Despite all these hardships in her life, she evolved as a powerful human being inspiring us with her motivational work.

Sylvia Plath and Maya Angelou had their own shares of ups and downs. Both of them are impressive in their own way. While one opened up a new perspective for looking into complexities in human lives, the other led her way shining from the embers of her own past.

As our study concerns the investigation the linguistic aspects of feminist language, we have selected the poems, that best describes and outlines the mentioned task in the poems of Sylvia Plath and Maya Angelou. The following poems have been selected for farther discussion: *The Phenomenal Woman* and *Still I Rise* (Maya Angelou) and *Mushrooms* and *Lady Lazarus* (Sylvia Plath). The two poets made an enduring poetry for the world.

In her poems *The Phenomenal Woman* and *Still I Rise*, Maya Angelou tries to reveal the face of the man who attempt to humiliate and discriminate women by their awful actions. She appeals and encourages women to be confident, because every woman is beautiful and strong enough to deal with all the problems around. She urges that if women are alive, they have strength and all kinds of possibilities to stand on their own feet. She says in her poems that if you believe in yourself, the whole world is in your hands. And she frequently addresses the men ironically, who are surprised by the strength of women (*I walk into a room, Just as cool as you please, And to a man, The fellows stand or Fall down on their knees...Now you understand. Just why my head's not bowed. I don't shout or jump about Or have to talk real loud. When you see me passing, It ought to make you proud (Phenomenal Woman).*

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise....
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise (**Still I Rise**)

Like Angelou, Sylvia Plath in the selected poems focuses on pain, depression, and male Oppression:

*Nobody sees us, Stops us, betrays us;
The small grains make room..*

And I a smiling woman.

I am only thirty.

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

Unlike Angelou, she also focuses on the concept of suicide. Though both of the poets strongly emphasize the strength of women, and their oppression, both of them try to convince and encourage women to unite their forces against oppression and not to give up. Despite all failures, women can “rise up from the ashes” and go on living. According to their lines, women are very strong. Plath in one of her poems depicts her innumerable efforts to suicide, but in vain, all of her attempts are futile; despite her desire to die, she still continuous to fight against injustice and misogyny and from there the strong nature of women is revealed.

To conclude with, the reason why those poets are so distinctive is that both of them depicts their own troublesome ways of life and that make their poetry more expressive and emotive. Plath and Angelou were among those feminist writers who managed to fight against oppression, depression, humiliation and pain. They wrote each line of their poems to alarm other women and involve them in the battle of women's freedom.

Linguistic Aspects of the Language of Feminist Poets

Generally, linguistic analysis of poetry involves the contextual level analysis in terms of relevant extra-textual information and relevant patterns of grammatic and phonological structure (Leech 1991).

"Insistence on keeping poetics apart from linguistics is warranted only when the field of linguistics appears to be illicitly restricted. " It is part of the task of linguistics to describe texts; and all texts, including those, prose and verse, which fall within any definition of "literature", are accessible to analysis by the existing methods of linguistics. In talking of "the linguistic study" of literary texts we mean, of course, not "the study of the language" but "the study (of the language) by the theories and methods of linguistics". The justification for using linguistic methods in literary analysis is that existing grammatical, lexical, phonological and phonetic theory is already valid and relevant for the purpose (Halliday 2002:5-6).

To start with, the first difference between those poets that is depicted within their poetry is a graphological difference. Sylvia Plath uses tercets or triplets

*Overnight, very
Whitely, discreetly,
Very quietly*

*Our toes, our noses
Take hold on the loam,
Acquire the air.,.*

while in Maya Angelou's poems are mainly based on sestets, septet or even octaves:

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.*

*Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,*

*The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.*

We also find some differences in the graphical design of poems, where we find dashes in only Plath's poems and by using them, he tries to create definite stylistic effect:

*I manage it —
Do I terrify? —
Them unwrap me hand and foot —
For the hearing of my heart —
Ash, ash —
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there —*

Both of the writer uses different forms of punctuation marks, such as exclamatory and question marks, but we have to mention that variety of them are used in Angelou's poetry, where the addressing forms to men are mostly constructed by direct and ironical questions to laugh at and incriminate them in their cruddy minds toward women and by humiliating them Angelou tries to underline the strong sides of women.

*Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom? -
Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Does my haughtiness offend you?
Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise?

At the meeting of my thighs? -*

When the reader starts reading the selected poems, one immediately identifies the numerous examples of *linguistic parallelism at word or a phrase level*. Abundance of these constructions can be explained by the fact that, the poets, in each line, or in each stanza try to emphasize the role, strength and beauty of women, try to convince the world in women's mighty soul:

*'These are my hands
My knees'
'They had to call and call'
I do it exceptionally well.*

*I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.*

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
Comeback in broad day
To *the same place, the same face, the same brute*
For the *eyeing of my scars*, there is a charge
For the *hearing of my heart* —
It really goes.

..*Soon, soon* the flesh...

' *We are shelves, we are*
Tables, we are meek,
We are edible,
Our toes, our noses...
..*Nobody sees us,*
Stops us, betrays us

We find examples of *homoioтелеuton* - the repetition of the same derivational or inflectional ending on different words, in Plath's poems and a rhythmical utterance is formed there:

... Overnight, very
White*ly*, discreet*ly*,
Very quiet*ly*
Our hammers, our rams,
Earless and eye*less*,
Perfect*ly* voice*less*.

Examples of *immediate repartitions* are found in the poems:

Soon, soon the flesh

They had to call and call....

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.. (Plath)

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise

I rise.

*I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me (Angelou).*

In the given lines, polyptoton- repetition of varying grammatical inflections is used. The words are also mentioned at the end of each stanza, and by repeating these patterns the poet tries to underline her power and strength.

Examples of epistrophe i.e. the final repetition of the same words or word combinations, is also engaged in the poetry:

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,

As for the stylistic coloring of the selected poems, we won't exaggerate if we say that, the poems of Maya Angelou and Sylvia Plath have strong effect of expressiveness and emotiveness that is achieved by using numerous examples of metaphors, similes and comparisons and epithets:

*Our toes, our noses
Take hold on the loam...[metaphor]*

.....

But they can't *touch*
My inner mystery [epithet]

.....

And the joy in my feet.....*Then they swarm around me.....A hive of honey bees.....*The curl of my lips[metaphor].

Using two forms of figurative language in one sentence is quite usual in the poems: Following stanzas esthetically and emotively combine *metaphors* and *epithets*.

*Soft fists insist on
Heaving the needles,
The leafy bedding..*

...

*Our hammers, our rams,
Earless and eyeless,*

*Perfectly voiceless,
Widen the crannies,*

Combination of *epithet* and a *simile* in Plath's poems, where she describes herself as a walking miracle and her skin is compared the brightness of lampshade:

*A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,*

Combination of metaphor and simile is quite characteristic to the poets:

*Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.
Dying
Is an art, like everything else.*

The strength of women is compared to the strength of the moon and the sun, and the tides of ocean by using simile:

*Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise (Angelou).*

Other distinctive examples of *simile*.

*And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.
Shoulders falling down like teardrops
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

*'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room*

*And like the cat I have nine times to die.
I rocked shut
As a seashell.*

The poets express their feeling by powerful examples of *epithets*.

The sour breath....
The peanut-crunching crowd...
It's the theatrical
Comeback in broad day...
.....
With your bitter, twisted lies
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Angelou's writing style of poems is rather distinctive, she makes a great combination of different linguistic forms; it is also quite characteristic for her to use whole stanzas

metaphorical:

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise

.....

*It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.*

.....

*The pure gold baby
That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn...*

In poetry there are frequently found some irregularities. For more expressiveness poets often break grammar rules and Plath and Angelou are not exceptions; they enjoy literary coloring outside the lines. We have identified several examples of grammatical deviations, where word order is broken.

*We shall by morning
Inherit the earth.
the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me...*

In Angelou's poem we find examples of phonological deviations, such as *aphesis*, shortening the beginning of a word and an *apocope*, shortening the end of a word:

*'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells..
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard....
'Cause I'm a woman.*

Conclusion

As we have mentioned above, the goal of the research is to identify the linguistic aspects of emotional language of the selected poems in Maya Angelou and Sylvia Plath's works. Both of the writers were under oppression, they had to overcome lots of problems, though they managed not only to survive but they were able to "rise from ashes" that made them stronger. Their poems give hope, belief and strength millions of women to struggle for their own right and independence. In each line there is given a hope, strength, and struggle. We have identified similar use of grammatical constructions in the poetry of Maya Angelou and Sylvia

Plath. Both of the frequently uses repetitions, though grammatical and lexical deviation is quite rarely identified; we find examples of shortened forms; mostly there are used *-of* constructions while describing those characteristics of women, that so impress men; Various examples of simile, metaphor, epithets make their language more emotive and expressive.

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ფემინისტ პოეტთა ემოციური ენის ლინგვისტური ასპექტები

ლაზვიაშვილი შორენა

ღარიბაშვილი მანანა

სსიპ იაკობ გოგებაშვილის სახელობის
თელავის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

აბსტრაქტი

ქალები უკვე საუკუნეებია იბრძვიან დამოუკიდებლობისთვის, მათი

სოციალური თუ პოლიტიკური თანასწორობისთვის. იმის გამო, რომ მათი უფლებები და თავისუფლება მუდამ უარყოფილი იყო, ისინი საზოგადოების არასრულფასოვან და უმნიშვნელო წევრებად ითვლებოდნენ. ქალთა მიმართ მიზოგინიამ და ჩაგვრამ ერთგავრი ბიძგი მისცა მსოფლიოში ფემინიზმის, როგორც მოძრაობის, ჩამოყალიბებასა და გააღვივებას. შესაბამისად, ფემინისტურმა მოძრაობამ ასახვა პოვა ლიტერატურაზე და მის ერთ-ერთ მიმდინარეობად ჩამოყალიბდა დროთა განმავლობაში. ფემინისტური ლიტერატურა მკაფიოდ უსვამს ხაზს, თუ რაოდენ მნიშვნელოვანია ენის, კულტურისა და აზროვნების ურთიერთმიმართება და ურთიერთქმედება.

უაღრესად საინტერესო აღმოჩნდა ფემინისტურ პოეზიაზე დაკვირვება და ფემინისტ ქალ-პოეტთა ენის ლინგვისტური ანალიზი, რომელიც გაჟღენთილია სიტყვის თავისუფლებისაკენ ლტოლვით. შესაბამისად, ჩვენი კვლევის მიზანია ფემინისტურ პოეზიაში ემოციური ენის ლინგვისტური ასპექტების გამოკვება და მათზე დაკვირვება. კვლევა ეფუძნება ფემინისტი პოეტ ქალთა (მაია ანჯელოუ და სილვია პლატი) შემოქმედების ლინგვისტურ ანალიზს, რის საფუძველზეც გამოიკვება იზომორფიზმები და ალომორფიზმები; განისაზღვრა აღნიშნულ პოეტთა წერის სტილი და მთელი რიგი ლინგვისტური მახასიათებლები, რომლებიც ქმნიან ემოციურ ენას და მაღალმხატვრულ ელფერს სძენენ ფემინისტურ შემოქმედებას.