Presupposition and Women's Language: Women's Empowerment in Asma Elbadawi's Utterances in Social Media

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Abstract

This study analyzed linguistic strategies in conveying women's empowerment messages through social media, focusing on Instagram and YouTube. By combining Robin Lakoff's *women's language* theory and George Yule's *presupposition* theory, this research highlights how specific language choices construct empowerment narratives. Using a descriptive qualitative method and purposive sampling technique, it analyzes posts and statements centered on women's empowerment. The study reveals the use of various of women's language features such—lexical hedges, intensifiers, and empty adjectives—alongside presuppositions like existential and factive presupposition, this research contributes to both linguistic and gender studies by demonstrating how everyday discourse subtly reinforces gendered identities and supports broader empowerment movement.

Keywords: *Presupposition, Women's Empowerment, Women's Language*

Introduction

In everyday life, humans perform social interactions through communication that serves as a tool to convey ideas, emotions and information. Communication can be expressed verbally or nonverbally, and language is the main element in both forms of communication. The Social interaction involves communication in its use; communication is the process when a message is conveyed from one party to another and the message can be understood by the recipient of the message (Dwi, 2023). Whereas, Language is a communication tool used by humans to interact, express themselves, and build social relationships (Rohmah, 2015). More than just a tool for transmitting information, language shapes the way people interact and connect with one another. This is especially on spontaneous and real-time platform like social media, where language becomes an essential instrument in constructing meaning, expressing identity, and delivering social messages

According to Taprial and Kanwar (2012) social media is the media allows one to be social or get social online by sharing content, news, photos, etc. with other people. In this digital era, social media has emerged as a leading technology and the dominant platform for communication, particularly Instagram and YouTube. Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as crucial channels enabling people to engage with one another, form communities, and exchange ideas (Ren, 2024). These platforms are not only utilized for entertainment but also to disseminate meaningful messages, including those related to identity and empowerment. Social media allows users to influence each other on various community issues and can shape public discourse. Consequently, social media represent a relevant space for linguistic study, especially in observing how language is employed to construct social narratives.

One of the most prominent issues observed is women's empowerment, according to the article *Understanding Women's Empowerment* (n.d.) Women's empowerment defined to promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choice, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. This empowerment is demonstrated through efforts to enhance women's self-quality, independence, and self-confidence. Within the context of social media, messages promoting this empowerment are conveyed through both visual and text forms.

In this study, media content featuring elements of women's empowerment will be sourced from two prominent social media platform, namely YouTube and Instagram. Specifically, the analysis will focus on utterances and posts by Asma Elbadawi. Asma Elbadawi, born in Sudan and raised in the United Kingdom, is widely recognized as an inspirational Muslim figure, and has a huge fan following across social media platform. Her multifaceted career includes achievements as a basketball player, activist, and poet; she is also a mother. Notably, Asma Elbadawi initiated a petition advocating for removal of the ban on hijab and other religious

headgear in sports, which ultimately led to the International Basketball Federation lifting the ban in 2014.

Lakoff (1975) as a pioneer in this field introduced the theory of women's language in *Language and Woman's Places*, he categorizes ten linguistic features that distinguish language use by women from men, which are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declarative, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, super polite form, hypercorrect grammar, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress (Pribadi et al., 2025) . These characteristics reflect societal expectations for women to be polite and foster positive relationships during communication. Previous studies have analyzed how language reflects and reinforces gender norms. For instance Prasetya, Indrawati, & Darmasetiyawan (2023) analyzed the language features and functions utilized by female characters in the romantic film *6 Years* using Lakoff's theory, and using Lakoff's theory. Moreover, Suhesty & Sriyono (2023) investigated the language features used by women in Najwa Zebian's podcast *Stories of the Soul* using comparable approach. Similarly, Soe, (2020) examine the use of sexist language in literature and society, focusing on how words with negative connotations for women reflect and reinforce gender biases in novel "*The Women's Room*". These studies apply women's language theory to analyze media such as films and podcasts, providing insight into how language can reflect and reinforce gender norms in media representations.

On the other hand, the field of pragmatics analyze how meaning is shaped through context and not just from what is explicitly stated. A presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance (Yule, 1996), through presupposition theory, Yule explains that there are hidden assumptions in an utterance that influence the way information is received and understood (Manurung et al., 2020). Presupposition, falling within the scope of pragmatic, Presupposition comes from the word to pre-suppose, which means to suppose beforehand, that before the speakers speak something, the speaker already has presupposition to the listener or the matter being discussed (Mujahidah, 2023). Rather than having a direct relationship with sentences, the presupposition is more closely related to speakers (Fitriani & Johan, 2023). According to George Yule that explained in *Pragmatics* (1996) presupposition, is the assumptions implied in certain linguistic expressions. These aassumption can be categorized into several types, including existential, factive, non-factive, lexical, structural, and counter-factual presuppositions. Presupposition has been applied in various studies to analyze commercials, films, and more, in order to uncover hidden meanings and ideologies within communications. For example, Manurung et al. (2020) in their research entitled "*Presupposition Analysis on Talk Show Hitam Putih*" investigated presupposition types in the talk show. The next example, Irayanti & Liliani (2022) in their research titled "The Presupposition Dinar Candy

Arrested?! "My Country Is So Funny Anyway" in Deddy Corbuzier Podcast Edition on August 6, 2021" investigated various forms of presuppositions in a podcast. Similarly, Solehah et al. (2022)in their article titled *"An Analysis of Presupposition on the Main Characters of Frozen Movie Script"* examines the use of presuppositions in the "Frozen" movie script through a pragmatic lens, focusing on how characters like Anna and Elsa employ different types of presuppositions to convey implied meanings within the dialogue. These studies utilized George Yule's theory of presupposition to inform their research. However, these studies rarely combine the pragmatics approach with linguistic gender studies. There is a tendency to separate studies that focus on how women speak (sociolinguistics) from how meaning is implicitly shaped (pragmatics).

Although the study of gender language is evolving, there remains a significant gap in integrating sociolinguistic and pragmatic approaches to analyze women's empowerment messages on social media. Previous studies have only highlighted the two aspects separately, however, there is a lack of research exploring the interaction in shaping empowerment discourse within this digital space. In addition, most of the existing research still relies on fictional content or predetermined scripts, thereby under-representing the real communication that occurs spontaneously on social media.

This research addresses this critical methodological and theoretical gap by uniquely combining insights from Robin Lakoff's women's language theory and George Yule's presupposition theory by analyzing how Asma Elbadawi —a Sudanese-British poet, activist, and athlete— employs linguistic strategies in her Instagram captions and YouTube statements to convey messages of women's empowerment. Specifically, this research will investigate the types of women's language features and presupposition present in Asma Elbadawi's social media content that containing elements of women empowerment. This study explores how gendered language function pragmatically in real-time user-generated content, shifting the focus from structured or formal contexts to genuine online interactions. It highlights how everyday digital communication becomes an arena for building power relations and negotiating identities through language.

Method

In this research, the researchers used descriptive qualitative method, that is appropriate for examining social phenomena through detailed interpretation of textual data. The qualitative method helps researchers explore linguistic patterns and hidden meanings behind language use, particularly in the context of women's empowerment. The data in this research collected through online observation focusing on Asma Elbadawi's utterance and posts in social media, specifically YouTube and Instagram. The data are collected from her personal Instagram account and YouTube channels that feature interview with her. The selected data

include posts and uploaded content throughout the year 2024. These platforms are chosen because they reflect her digital presence and providing linguistic data relevant to the topic.

To ensure relevance to the research objectives on women's language and presupposition in the discourse of women's empowerment, a purposive sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample. In other words, units are selected "on purpose" in purposive sampling (Nikolopoulu, 2022). Data collection can be conducted using a various technique, each with its own advantages and disadvantages for researchers. One of challenge encountered during data collection was a numerous posts appeared relevant, but several did not meet the criteria of containing both of presupposition and women's language features within a single unit. This limitation reduced the usable and requires careful sorting. However, one of the advantages found when analyzing data is getting detailed and satisfying results. This research did not use formal validity ensured such as peer review or triangulation, as the amount of data was limited and not sufficient for the procedures. Instead, the analysis was conducted carefully and thoroughly to ensure that the findings remained consistent with the theory used. Here are the steps to collecting data:

a. Searching for relevant social media content related to Asma Elbadawi
b. Selecting Instagram and YouTube content that discussed women's empowerment
c. Filtering data that contain features of presupposition and women's language
d. Identifying relevant sentences or utterances from the content for further analysis.

After collecting the data, the next step is analysis data that was carried out in the following steps:

a. Identifying and annotating sentences that show presupposition and women's language features.
b. Interpreting the meaning of these features in context
c. Classifying the data based on their linguistic features that refer to women empowerment.
d. Concluding remarks on how language is used to construct messages of women's empowerment in Asma Elbadawi's social media presence

Results and Discussion
Data 1
Instagram @asmaelbadawi
"What gave you your voice and saved you? For me it was photography. Over the years I have got the chance to tell my own stories and collaborate with like-minded photographers. And I can't put into words how powerful that has been for me."

This feed, posted on November 8, 2024. This post is about Asma Elbadawi telling the story of what saved her from a difficult time, this is an introspective reflection on her personal journey of finding her voice and strength through art. The phrase "*tell my own stories*" Classified as an **existential presupposition** because this phrase contains the assumption that there are stories to be told, the use of the possessive pronoun "my" triggers the assumption that the story exists, and asserting that these stories belong to her. Confirming the existence and ownershipof these narratives.

Furthermore, in the context of women's language, the phrase "*And I can't put into words how powerful that has been for me"* is classified as an **empty adjective** because it functions as an emotional emphasize as in accordance with the features in women's language by Lakoff (1973). Although the word "powerful" has a literal meaning, in this context, the expression "can't put into words" indicates that "powerful" is used more to emphasize very strong feelings rather than as a clear or factual description. It is a way of expressing very intense feelings, which is often associated with the female style of language in conveying deep personal experiences.

The use of empty adjectives in this statement does not reduce the meaning, but rather reinforces the message of empowerment being conveyed. This phrase is interpreting too powerful to put into words emphasize the deep emotional intensity of the experience. This aspect reinforces the empowerment message, as it shows that women can choose through what and in which way they will convey their life experiences. Women certainly have the freedom to express these experiences in a way that fits their identity.

Data 2
Instagram @asmaelbadawi
"Dear daughter is dedicated to my daughter and the daughters of all Sudanese women who wanted to show their daughters where they come from. I hope when the war is over, we get the honor of introducing our daughters to our homelands."

This feed, posted on August 24, 2024 in the midst of the conflict in Sudan. The poem reflects Asma's dream that her children will be able to play in their village in Sudan, while also showing her dedication to emphasizing the importance of

preserving cultural heritage and identity. The phrase "*my daughter*" function as an **existential presupposition**, as the use of possessive pronoun "my" assumes the speaker's relation with child, thereby confirming the existence of a daughter. Thereafter, the phrase "*I hope*" pointed a **lexical hedge**, indicating a statement where final conclusion is uncertain. This feature, identified by (Lakoff, 1975) as a characteristic of women's language, The use of hedges such *as well, you know, seems, I think, perhaps, you see, sort of* or fillers such as *ah, uh, and um* by women has four functions, including to appear more polite, to express uncertainty, to make the speaker confident about the statement made to attract the listener's attention, and to open statements and questions (Hapsari et al., 2022).

This text conveys a message of women empowerment by expressing the desire of Asma to show their daughter where they come from, affirms the role of women not only a mother but also agents of historical continuity. Both of presupposition and women's language aspect in this text is hopes of reclaiming their homeland reflect empowerment. Highlighting women's resiliency in the midst of conflict and refuge. Through respectful language, it emphasizes women's role in conserving identity and shaping future generations.

Data 3
Instagram @asmaelbadawi
"*The Olympics in Paris were ment to be inspired by equality yet French muslim women were not allowed to wear their hijab. Am I surprised? No and I guess that's the sad part.*"

This feed, posted in August 8, 2024 discussed the 2024 Olympic. The phrase "*The Olympic in Paris*" contains an **existential presupposition**, triggered by the definite noun phrase "The Olympics", which assumes the existence of the event. Meanwhile, the clause "*French muslim women were not allowed to wear their hijab*" shows a **factive presupposition**, with the verb phrase "*were not allowed*" presupposing that the restriction is truly happened. Next,s the phrase "*Am I surprised? No and I guess that's the sad part*" categorized a **lexical hedges**, Word "I guess" representing a caution sign, gives a more dramatic feel than simply stating "that's the sad part".

Hedges are word or phrases used to soften or reduce the level of certainty in a statement, it's show uncertainty or caution in expressing an opinion. The use of this hedge helps the writer convey disappointment in a subtle way, without sounding rude or imposing her opinion. This style is often found in women's language to convey criticism or discomfort gently, while still encouraging readers to think more deeply about the content of the message. This data is containing women empowerment because it encourages the audience to understand that. This caption strongly relates to the discourse of women empowerment, as it implicitly defends

the right of Muslim women to choose what they wear even in a high profile and regulated events like The Olympics. Thus, presupposition and women's language here help the issue not only of politics or policy, but also a deeply experience of being silenced or controlled.

Data 4
Instagram @asmaelbadawi
"We started campaigning @fiba to allow Muslim women to wear the hijab in basketball in 2016 with a friendly game in Istanbul. …. There is no room for discrimination in sport and I'm so disappointed that @olympics have allowed France to keep hosting despite them not showing any sign of respecting French athletes right to compete while wearing the hijab."

This feed, posted in June 12, 2024 is Elbadawi (2024) complaint to the Olympics. The sentence "*We started campaigning @fiba to allow Muslim women to wear the hijab in basketball in 2016 with a friendly game in Istanbul",* indicates a factive presupposition which reveals the fact that there was a previous ban on wearing the hijab for Olympic participants. And the following sentence, "*…and I'm so disappointed that @olympics have allowed France to keep hosting despite them not showing any sign of respecting French athletes right to compete while wearing the hijab"* also shows **factive presupposition** because the sentence shows the fact that France doesn't respect hijab-wearing for women athletes, factive presupposition involves certain verbs that imply the truth of the embedded proposition (Jaya, 2024).

From the aspect of women's language, the phrase "*and I'm so disappointed"* indicates the feature of **intensifiers** referring to the word 'so' with the function to strengthen the expression of disappointment and emotion of the speaker, according to Oktapiani et al. (2017) Substituting an intensifier like so for absolute superlative (like, very, really, utterly) seems to be way of backing out of committing oneself strongly to an opinion. Furthermore, from the whole sentence, this text also indicates the Avoidance of strong swear words feature because even though she is in a bad emotional condition, she still uses polite diction and in accordance with Lakoff's hypothesis that women tend to avoid harsh or taboo language.

This text certainly conveys an empowering message, especially when it comes to the expression of disappointment and emotion of the speaker. Encourage women to keep speaking up for what is rightfully theirs. Both presupposition and women's language aspect in this text point out the strengthening of the message conveyed, the presupposition leads the reader to the reality of discrimination that still occurs, and the women's language aspect emphasize the real disappointment.

Data 5

YouTube WardahBeauty

"There was 12 of us around the world we were all campaigning, there was a woman from Indonesia, there was Saudi Arabia, there was Istanbul, um…. Nigeria, USA, like we were shattered, scattered across the whole entire world and then we campaigned and we got people to sign and overall, we got 132,000 signatures all together and then it became something that FIBA had to talk about on their agenda" (WardahBeauty, 2024)

This text was obtained from a YouTube video uploaded on 22 March 2024 on the WardahBeauty YouTube channel. In the sentence "*There was 12 of us around the world we were all campaigning*" is classified as **existential presupposition**, As proven by their campaigning actions, the existence of these 12 people is the truth. And the sentence *We campaigned and we got people to sign,* can be classified as **factive presupposition** because they campaigned and got 132.000 people's signs as a result. Proving fact that they are really campaigning and had a real impact.

Then further from the aspect of women's language, the phrase "*Like we were shattered"* is a feature of **lexical hedges**, one of which is the phrase "like" as a form of expressing opinions without sounding confrontational or softening statements, The words such as I think, I'm sure, I mean, you know, sort of, perhaps, and like are known as hedges since they express the speaker's certainty or uncertainty about the proposition under discussion (Muthia et al., 2021). In this text, there are also fillers, with the use of "*um…"* which works as a pause **filler**, also serves to soften the statement. All of these utterances reflect empowerment because they report that there is a movement that gathered from various backgrounds to fight for freedom of dress for female Muslim athletes.

Existential and factual presuppositions affirm that this movement is real and impactful, as evidenced by an active campaign that generated 132,000 signatures and attention from FIBA. The use of language such as lexical hedges and fillers does not weaken the message; rather, it demonstrates a persuasive and emotional communication strategy. These features make the message feel more personal and touching, while also reflecting the strength of women in effectively and globally advocating for social change.

Conclusion

This research investigates how linguistic features in the form of women's language as theoritized Robbin Lakoff and presupposition by George Yule are used in conveying messages of women's empowerment through social media, especially YouTube and Instagram. The analysis show that Asma Elbadawi actively uses women's language features such as Lexical hedges, intensifiers, empty adjectives, and avoiding strong swear words, which function in strengthening emotional

impressions but still with polite delivery. Meanwhile, the presuppositions found in the data are primarily factive and existential presupposition, these types appear to form implied meanings and convey assumptions already understood by both parties, thus strengthening the message without the necessity of explicit statements.

The findings show that language use on social media is not only personal expression, but also serving as a powerful tool to communicate important issues such as women's empowerment. By combining the pragmatics approach with linguistic gender studies in social media analysis, this research offers insights into how implicit meanings and gendered communication styles shape the discourse of empowerment. this approach helps us understand how language works to create and spreading social messages on digital platforms. This research is a case study limited to content uploaded throughout 2024 on two social media platforms. Additionally, this research is interpretative and contextualized depending on the author's understanding of the text and the cultural setting of Asma Elbadawi as a public figure. Considering these limitations, future research is encouraged to expand the scope of objects and platforms in the future.

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