A Stylistic Analysis of Rhetorical Questions in Feminist Plays: Female Vs. Male Playwrights

Marvat Mahmoud

Abstract

The objective of this study is to highlight differences in using rhetorical questions between female and male feminist playwrights. A stylistic analysis is carried out on two play scripts. A female-written play: Treadwell's *Machinal* and a male-written play: Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. This stylistic analysis aims at clarifying how the gender of the author affects his/her choice of rhetorical questions while writing feminist plays. Both female and male feminist playwrights are found to use rhetorical questions for the same stylistic purposes while addressing feminist issues on stage.

Keywords: stylistics; language & gender studies; rhetorical questions

Introduction

It has often been claimed and even proven by many studies that men & women use language differently, not just in spoken discourse, but also when it comes to using stylistic tools and strategies in writing (Lakoff, 1975; Spender, 1980; Tannen, 1990, Coates, 1998). The research problem in this study is the following: When it comes to writing for the feminist theatre, do male and female playwrights still use stylistic tools like rhetorical questions differently? Or do both

in this case use similar stylistic tools to pass on their feminist message?

In order to answer this fundamental question, a feminist stylistic analysis of two feminist plays is carried out to investigate the use of rhetorical questions in one female-written play and compare the results to those from another male-written play.

Literature Review

Differences between the language used by men and the language used by women have been extensively observed and it is clear that "male and female language styles are quite distinct" (O'Loughlin, 2000, p. 2). According to Cameron and Coates: "the existence of sex differences in language use is part of our folk linguistic heritage" (1985, p. 143). However, what has been less clear is what the reasons for these differences might be. Lakoff's (1975) 'deficit' framework, Spender's (1980) 'dominance' framework and Tannen's (1990) 'difference' framework all attempt to interpret male-female linguistic differences.

First, the 'deficit' framework refers to any approach which interprets male-female linguistic differences as evidence for women's powerlessness and subordinate status to men. Lakoff is widely regarded as the key proponent of this position. In her classic article *Language and Women's Place*, Lakoff (1975) raises the question of gender differences in speech. She identifies her objective as understanding what language use can tell us about sexual inequities. She views women as having been taught to use language in ways that relegate them to subservient status in society. She views women's speech as deficient, as conveying weakness, uncertainty, and unimportance, in contrast to the standard or

neutral language spoken by men, asserting that their language contributes to women's inferior status.

According to Lakoff (1975), linguistic behaviour is heavily influenced by training and education. So, women and men speak as they do because they have, from childhood, been rewarded for doing so, overtly and subtly. This means that women sound inferior not because they are naturally deficient in some way, but because they have been trained to be so. They are taught what appropriate women's speech consists of. In a male-dominated society, women are brought up to think of assertion, authority and forcefulness as masculine qualities which they should avoid. They are taught instead to display feminine qualities of weakness, passivity and deference to men. According to Lakoff (1975) if they embrace women's language, their particular style of speech is used to ridicule them and justify their oppression.

Lakoff's work is generally criticized for its lack of empirical data. Her work relies on introspection and casual observation. Rather than collecting corpora of male and female speech, Lakoff makes claims based on her intuitions and anecdotal observation of her peer's language use.

The dominance framework, developed by Spender (1980), portrays women as being literally dominated by men in their talk, in terms of both the amount they talk, and their control over the topic. According to her, language aims at "silencing women" (1980, p. 51). For Spender, language is sexist because men, who are in a position of power, dominate and control it. Male grammarians, politicians, orators, philosophers and linguists have all had the power to name the world from their own perspective, and create a language that suits their own ends. It is precisely because men have a "monopoly over language", they are able to impose their

worldview on everyone, and thereby ensure "the myth of male superiority" (1980, p. 1). According to Spender (1980), "It has been the dominant group – in this case, males – who have created the world, invented the categories, constructed sexism and its justification and developed a language trap which is in their interest". (p. 142)

Despite its merits, the dominance approach to the study of gender is not without its limitations. The inherent problem with the dominance approach is that the theory is almost based on men's dominant position in society, with women being portrayed as "weak, helpless victims of a patriarchy that forces them to act in weak, passive, irrational or ineffective ways" (Freeman & McElhinny, 1996, p. 236). In fact, dominance is seen to be in the same category as "weakness", "passivity" and "deficiency" (Uchida, 1998, p. 286), effectively portraying women as disempowered members of society. This can be seen as a distortion of reality, "depreciating the amount of power women have succeeded in winning and minimizes the chances of further resistance" (Jaggar, 1983, p. 115).

Third, the 'difference' framework is most commonly associated with the work of Tannen (1990). This theory is developed as a reaction to both the deficit and dominance theories. In essence, researchers who subscribe to this theory claim that men and women have different but "equally valid styles" (Tannen, 1990, p. 15). They ascribe the reason for the different forms of language used by men and women to their early socialization. Boys and girls "grow up in different worlds of words" (Tannen 1990, p. 43). Therefore, male-female linguistic style differences are similar to the differences one might expect to see between people from different cultures. It follows that interaction between men and women is like cross-cultural communication (1990, p. 18) and "instead of different dialects, it could be said that we speak different genderlects" (1990, p. 42). According to Tannen, although both styles are

valid on their own terms, the differences can generate misunderstandings and tensions. Tannen (1990) sums up the gist of the cross-cultural miscommunication view by stating that "Boys and girls grow up in different worlds, but we think we're in the same one, so we judge each other's behavior by the standards of our own (p. 254).

Tannen (1990) claims that men's conversational style is based on competitiveness, while women have a more co-operative conversational style. Tannen's examination of a range of speech actions from advice-giving, story-telling, reactions to another's account of problems, asking for and giving information, compliments and gossip leads her to conclude that while men approach the world as individuals in a hierarchical social order in which they are either one up or one down, women approach the world as individuals in a network of connections. Tannen further expands on the 'dual- culture' model and argues that for women, a conversation is a chance to make connections; for men, each interaction can result in a winner or a loser. Tannen refers to women as engaging in "rapport talk," whereas men engage in "report talk." In her writings for a popular audience, Tannen uses anecdotes and examples to demonstrate how and why women and men have different perspectives on the same situation. Men do not ask for help or directions because to ask undermines agency and is a form of helplessness. In the same vein, men do not share their problems, express their vulnerability, or ask for advice. Women, however, do share their problems, ask for help, make small talk, and connect through conversation.

Tannen (1993) claims that women and men run into conversational trouble not because of hierarchy or inequality, but sees male/female differences as comparable to cultural differences, and while she never denies the existence of gender inequality, she thinks it both inaccurate and unfair to assume

that men purposefully dominate women in talk. She rather believes that men and women have different ways of talking that may give rise to misunderstanding between them. The solution to which is greater awareness and tolerance on both sides. Tannen (1993) states "[T]hat men dominate women is not in question; what I am problematizing is the source and workings of domination and other interpersonal intentions and effects." (p. 21).

Tannen (1993) highlights the danger of linking linguistic forms with interactional intentions such as dominance and argues that linguistic strategies such as using questions, silence and indirectness are relative. Therefore, they cannot be used in the argument for men's dominance or women's powerlessness. In trying to understand how speakers use language, Tannen believes that the context, the speakers' conversational styles and most crucially the interaction of their styles with each other, must be considered.

> One cannot locate the source of domination in linguistic strategies such as interruption, volubility, silence and topic raising, as has been claimed. Similarly, one cannot locate the source of women's powerlessness in such linguistic strategies as indirectness, taciturnity, silence and tag questions, as has also been claimed. The reason one cannot do this is that the same linguistic means can be used for different, even opposite, purposes and can have different, even opposite, effects in different contexts. (1993, p. 32)

Tannen (1993) also argues against Spender's (1980) claim that men dominate women by silencing them. She claims that although researchers have counted numbers of words spoken and even timed length of talk in order to

demonstrate that men talk more than women and thereby dominate interactions (James & Drakich, 1993), the association of volubility with dominance does not hold for all settings and cultures. In her words, "Silence and volubility cannot always be taken to mean power or powerlessness, domination or subjugation. Rather, both may imply either power or solidarity, depending on the dynamics discussed." (p. 39). Tannen elaborates using the example of an interrogation, in which the interrogator does little talking, but holds all the power.

The difference framework, like other frameworks, has also been criticized. First, some feminists respond critically to Tannen's arguments. Uchida (1998) has wide-ranging critical responses. She has criticisms of both "dominance" and "difference" frameworks. She questions whether it makes any sense to separate the two concepts in a discussion of gender relations. She argues that even if one can validly talk about women and men forming different subcultures, it still has to be borne in mind that the overall cultural context is one of male dominance.

> It is a mistake to separate power and culture of women and men – and to assume that the two are independent constructs, much less that one would sufficiently explain any sex difference. It is not only wrong on the part of the difference/ cultural approach to underestimate the effects of power structure and dominance; it is harmful. (Uchida, 1998, p. 281)

This model deliberately ignores or minimizes any aspects of gender inequality or power differences. Uchida (1998) argues that, because their models are based on observations of same-sex communication, miscommunication

theorists are unlikely to recognize the existence of patterns of inequality and dominance in communications between the sexes. Further, Uchida contends that miscommunication models only view dominance as something that is misinterpreted as existing in the interaction. If the speaker does not intend to dominate, then his conversational partner has misinterpreted the communication as dominating. Uchida (1998) asks: "If miscommunication is no one's fault, and is something that can be analyzed as mutual misunderstanding of well-meant behavior, why is it that the casualties are more often heavier on women than on men?" (p. 289).

With the emergence of a post-feminist perspective, the argument regarding the description and explanation of gender differences in language use has been politicized. Feminists studying language have in general been interested in promoting the study of sex difference than in criticizing it. However, the post-modern feminist tradition directs the attention to the way sex difference has been described and explained, rather than to the content of difference itself aiming at exposing the hidden political agenda of the social sciences. As Cameron (1992, p. 81) sums it: "The important thing about sex difference is not what it is so much as what it is made to mean".

For feminists, research on gender differences has a hidden agenda; that of female inferiority or continued male dominance. Thus, feminist linguists are interested in identifying and resisting the ways in which language is used to reflect, create, and sustain gender divisions and inequalities in society (Litosseliti, 2006).

Feminist linguists have two main motives for studying sex differences. One is positive: the quest for an authentic female language, whether this is taken to reflect some deep-

seated cognitive difference, or the existence in many societies of a distinctive female sub-culture. The other is more negative: to identify the sexual power dynamic in language use, the conventions and behaviors through which speech reflects and perpetuates gender inequality.

Gender has long been an area of social relations where dominance has been justified by difference. Male investigators have devoted endless time in their search for significant differences between the sexes on which to base their unequal treatment of women. For instance, in the 19th century, it was widely advocated that women should not have civil rights as in having the right to own property or the right to vote because it was claimed that they lacked the necessary reasoning facilities. Cameron (1992) argues that "[A] lot of sex difference research was done specifically in order to provide a scientific account of an already assumed female inferiority." (p. 36)

Situating feminist textual analysis research within the postmodern perspective encourages researchers to ask about whose interests are being served by the construction of gender as difference (Caplan & Caplan, 1994; Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994; Tavris, 1992) or whose interests are served by viewing gender differences as miscommunication rather than as related to sexual inequality or male dominance. There is an increasing emphasis on discourse analysis within contemporary research on gender and language. Discourse analysis is an attempt to understand the social issues, including inequalities and ideologies that are expressed within the discourse. Discourse analysis is not necessarily neutral, but seeks to examine whose interests are served, and whose are not, by the discourse in question. Analysis of language/discourse is one of the ways we can examine or expose the operation of power, and feminist discourse analysis can provide a critical perspective on

inequality sustained through language use (Lazar, 2007). Through control and manipulation of discourses, the dominant group can recruit people as collaborators in the policing of their own lives (Foucault, 1980). Discourses, or ways of seeing from a certain perspective, are manifested in text or language and serve to reflect, maintain, construct, and resist social practices (Litosseliti, 2006). Critical analysis of such discourses, or discourse analysis, exposes the (hidden) agenda and assumptions of the discourse (Litosseliti, 2006).

With the post-modern approach to language and gender, linguists find it hard to define gender: as Weedon (1987) puts it, "The nature of femininity and masculinity is one of the key sites of discursive struggle for the individual" (p. 98). Coates (1996) states that there is no single unified way of doing femininity; in other words of being a woman, although she gives the examples of wearing make-up and crying as stereotypical ways of performing femininity. She states that there is no such thing as a 'woman'; the meaning of 'woman' will depend on which discourse the word occurs in. Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or constitute them; different discourses constitute key entities such as 'woman' in different ways (Fairclough, 1992).

A feminist postmodern approach to gender and language might argue that we need to focus on the relationship between constructions of masculinity and femininity and language use and to extend our research beyond the study of White, middle-class people (Litosseliti, 2006). Today feminist linguists are concerned with diversity, multiplicity, performativity, and co-construction of gender and gender identities within specific contexts and communities of practice. In the words of Mills, "Post-feminist text analysis would demonstrate awareness of the complexity and context-specific nature of the meanings of

words within texts." (1998, p. 235). Besides, they are interested in the politics of power (Litosseliti, 2006). Research conducted from a feminist postmodern perspective might document gender-related linguistic phenomena and language use within specific communities of practice and tie these to observed and experienced gender inequalities. A feminist perspective acknowledges that language helps to establish and maintain the social order and power relations, but language also can challenge routine practice and contribute to social change (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2008).

Methodology

In this study, stylistic analysis is adopted to differentiate between the linguistic choices of male and female writers when tackling feminist issues in plays. To be specific, a feminist stylistic analysis is carried out to highlight male and female playwrights' differences with regards to using rhetorical questions in feminist plays.

Two plays advocating feminist issues are selected for the analysis. Sophie Treadwell's "Machinal" (1993) and Bernard Shaw's "Mrs. Warren's Profession" (2005). Both plays are written by famous playwrights, known for their impact on the feminist theatre. Second, they both have female leads. Third, both tackle women's issues as their central themes and finally and most importantly, they are all written at the turn of the 20th century.

Rhetorical Questions (RQs)

RQs have been defined by several scholars such as Beekman & Callow (1976), Cuddon (1979), Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985), Richards, Platt & Weber (1990), Wales (1991), and Yankah (1994) as that

question that is structurally the same as any other question but which, usually, is not designed or is not expected to elicit an answer. The main difference, however, is that the RQ is semantically/functionally a statement or claim because the writer is ready to tell his readers the answer, the answer is already known, or nobody, not even the writer, knows the answer. This means that getting an answer to such a question is the desire of every reader/listener. It could also be used to wrap-up discourse in a concluding statement based on previous discussions or facts presented such as: "What else can I say?" This means I have said all that has to be said.

Abioye (2009) elaborates on examples from literature to exemplify how RQs are used to achieve different purposes. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, for instance, Caesar used it to emphasize his personality as unmovable and unshakable as Mount Olympus: "Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus?" And completely devastated when he saw his most trusted Brutus among those that stabbed him:"Et tu Brute?- Then fall Caesar.(Act III Scene I). Mark Antony used RQs to charge emotions and to manipulate the audience, even while claiming he had "come to bury Caesar, not to praise him" and that he was not an orator:

> I am no orator, as Brutus is, For I have neither wit nor words nor worth, Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech, To stir men's blood: I only speak right on; I tell you that which you yourselves know; Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths, And bid them speak for me…Did this in Caesar seem ambitious? ... You all did love him once, not without cause. What cause withholds you then to mourn for him? … Here was a Caesar! When comes such another? (Act III Scene II)

RQs appear in both written and spoken language; therefore, it follows that they serve different functions, which include: (i) Rhetorical functions: where they are used basically to charge emotions, to express strong feelings of outrage, vehement indignation, jolt readers/listeners out of a state of complacency/stupor, etc (ii) Stylistic functions: it may be used to embellish one's writing as it provides variety in writing style and equally creates a break from the conventional writing format/style. (iii) Persuasive functions: here the RQ indirectly helps in forming or even changing an opinion as well as in stimulating arguments by presenting issues, sometimes directly to the audience. The foremost advantage of this device in language use in communication is that an avenue for personal interaction is opened/created between the writer/speaker and the listener/reader than one would find in conventional straightforward sentences. (iv) Grammatical function: is found in thematic focusing or referential prominence in a text. Thematic focusing refers to "the peg on which the message is hung". Other grammatical devices for thematic marking include word order, passive construction, cleft and relative constructions.

Rhetorical Questions in Treadwell's *Machinal*

This play depicts Helen, a woman who is crushed under the machine of society. She is destroyed by the cruelties of the patriarchy. She is pressured into accepting a marriage against her will as society grants her no other choice to get financial support. Feeling submissive and trapped in a marriage against her will, she kills her husband. The play represents the ultimate theatrical representation of the repressive marriage in the 1920s. The story was inspired by an actual murder case, which caused a sensation in the press largely because the couple appeared to be so ordinary. Treadwell unfolds the story

through a series of nine Expressionist episodes, each focusing on a different aspect of her life as an oppressed woman.

Treadwell presents the crushing forces of the abstract machinery of business, marriage, sex, motherhood, religion, the legal system, and the state. Barlow (1981) expresses a similar idea: "The villain of the piece is not Helen's materialistic husband . . . Nor is it the cavalier lover . . . who considers her just another conquest . . . Rather, the villain is a rigid society that has no room for human feelings and dreams, especially those of women" (xxix).

YOUNG WOMAN. Tell me - (Words suddenly pouring out.) **Your skin oughtn't to curl — ought it** — when he just comes near you — **ought it? That's wrong, ain't it? You don't get over that, do you** — ever, **do you** or don't you? How is it, Ma — **do you?**

You ought to be in love, oughtn't you, Ma? You must be in love, mustn't you, Ma? That changes everything, doesn't it — or does it?

When he puts a hand on me, my blood turns cold. **But your blood oughtn't to run cold, ought it?**

The question tags that Helen keeps on asking while discussing her boss's marriage proposal with her mother are used rhetorically as Helen is not really expecting an answer from her mother. These questions are meant to reflect her inner conflict. They show her agony as for her it is either to accept his proposal and get financial support or refuse him and live in utter poverty. She does not want to marry her boss as she does not love him. On the contrary, she is actually repulsed and disgusted every time he touches her or holds her hand. She is waiting for a romance. She wants to marry somebody who is

young and attractive; somebody she loves. However, she knows that he can support her financially. Therefore, she fires such rhetorical questions at her mother in vain, looking for reassurance. She is partly trying to get her mother's sympathy and support. She wants her mother to second her opinion and assure her that this is not how she is supposed to feel towards a man whom she is going to marry and to support her in turning his proposal down. However, this does not happen.

Treadwell uses epistemic modals like "ought to" and "must" to show a high degree of certainty to the propositions given. She believes that marriage "must" be based on love and nothing else. This certainty explains Helen's conflict. Even though she is quite certain that she must not marry a man she despises, she still feels compelled to do it.

YOUNG WOMAN. I don't love him. MOTHER. Love! — **What does that amount to! Will it clothe you? Will it feed you? Will it pay the bills?**
YOUNG WOMAN. But Ma - didn't you love pa? MOTHER. I suppose I did — I don't know — I've forgotten — **what difference does it make — now?**

Helen's mother, on the other hand, uses several rhetorical questions that provoke not just Helen's thinking, but also the audience. Her firing questions shed light on the materialistic nature of the patriarchal society that does not believe in love as a prerequisite to marriage. Love is simply viewed as obsolete. On the other hand, what really counts is how much money you will have. The mother asks her questions in an attempt to pressure her daughter into accepting Jones's marriage proposal, because she relies on Helen for financial support. This again shows that the mother belongs to the patriarchy.

Here, economic dependence on males becomes a clear cause of female repression. Treadwell highlights that financial independence is a prerequisite to the equality between men and women. Helen can hardly make a living and support her mother with her current job, which she might risk losing if she rejects her boss's offer. For her, it is sort of a loser-loser situation; she can marry a man she despises, but still get free from all this work that is pressuring her and get financial security. Therefore, sexual submission to the boss is the price of this freedom, and amounts to little more than prostitution.

YOUNG WOMAN -- Oh my God! **Am I never to be let alone!** Always to have to submit — to submit!
YOUNG WOMAN (weeping). Submit! Submit! **Is nothing mine?** The hair on my head! The very hair on my head. [...] YOUNG WOMAN. **Am I never to be let alone! Never to have peace!**

These rhetorical questions shed light on Helen's desire to have basic rights like freedom and peace. Treadwell uses rhetorical questions through Helen to evoke the audiences' emotions and arouse their feelings of sympathy and pity for her.

Rhetorical questions in Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

In the play, Shaw represents two female figures: Kitty Warren and her daughter Vivie. On the one hand, Mrs. Warren, representing the old woman, gives in to her patriarchal society by taking the job of a prostitute and later on the wealthy owner of a chain of brothels to make a living because as a woman she is not granted the same job opportunities as men. On the other hand, Vivie, representing the New Woman who is well educated and who has a free will,

chooses to live a more respectable life, refuses her mother's prostitution money and decides to become independent, get a respectable job and support herself while Mrs. Warren chooses to remain with her prostitution business because of the wealth it offers. Powell (2004) states that Shaw said he wrote the play

> to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing and overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together." (Powell, 2004, p. 229)

MRS WARREN. **But where can a woman get the money to save in any other business? Could you save out of four shillings a week and keep yourself dressed as well?**
MRS WARREN. [...] All we had was our appearance and our turn for pleasing men. **Do you think we were such fools as to let other people trade in our good looks by employing us as shop girls, or barmaids, or waitresses, when we could trade in them ourselves and get all the profits instead of starvation wages?** Not likely.
MRS WARREN. **How could you keep your self-respect in such starvation and slavery? And what's a woman worth? What's life worth?** Without self-respect!
MRS WARREN. **What's the use in such hypocrisy?** If people arrange the world that way for women, there's no good pretending it's arranged the other way.
MRS WARREN. **Why shouldn't I have done it?** The house

in Brussels was real high class: a much better place for a woman to be in than the factory where Anne Jane got poisoned.

MRS WARREN. **What is any respectable girl brought up to do but to catch some rich man's fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him?** — as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing!

MRS WARREN. My own opinions and my own way of life! Listen to her talking! **Do you think I was brought up like you? able to pick and choose my own way of life? Do you think I did what I did because I liked it, or thought it right, or wouldn't rather have gone to college and been a lady if I'd had the chance?**

MRS WARREN. [...] Your head is full of ignorant ideas about me. **What do the people that taught you know about life or about people like me? When did they ever meet me, or speak to me, or let anyone tell them about me?** The fools! **Would they ever have done anything for you if I hadn't paid them? Haven't I told you that I want you to be respectable? Haven't I brought you up to be respectable? And how can you keep it up without my money and my influence and Lizzie's friends? Can't you see that you're cutting your own throat as well as breaking my heart in turning your back on me?**

MRS WARREN. [...] **What rights have you to set yourself up above me like this?** You boast of what you are to me—to me, who gave you a chance of being what you are. **What chance had I?** Shame on you for a bad daughter and a stuck-up prude!

In all previous rhetorical questions, Mrs. Warren tries to justify working in prostitution and even prospering from it. She attempts at rationalizing the whole thing. In literature, rhetorical questions are a very powerful persuasive and thought-provoking tool. Shaw wants people to think in order to bring them to a conviction of sin. He attacks the system which restricts women to exploitative professions that do not secure for them financial independence. He wants his audience to picture that in a society without decent employment opportunities, women have no choice but to turn to prostitution whether in or out of marriage. The dramatic effects of Mrs. Warren's questions force the audience to think about the nature of women's oppression and suffering. Through this tool, Shaw declares his resentment to this patriarchal society under which he claims prostitution was practically compulsory, the alternative being starvation.

Here, rhetorical questions are used to provoke thinking. Through Mrs. Warren's firing rhetorical questions, Shaw gets his audience to think of the economic basis of women's oppression under the capitalism of a patriarchal society. He criticizes the capitalist economy of the Victorian era which generated the sexual division of labour: Women were given the most low-paying and unfulfilling jobs and therefore remained economically dependent. First there is Anne Jane, Mrs. Warren's step sister who chose to work in a white lead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week only expecting her hands to be paralyzed, dies of lead poisoning. Second, the six hundred girls who worked in Croft's factory only earning starvation wages, turned to prostitution to keep a living. Finally, Mrs. Warren herself resorted to prostitution as she lived in poverty and the openings left to her as a poor girl were deeply exploitative. She worked as a maid in a restaurant, then a waitress and finally a barmaid working fourteen hours a day for four shillings a week.

The recurrence of rhetorical questions emphasizes Mrs. Warren's frustration caused by Vivie's contempt and disdain of her mother's profession. The play's message becomes clear: as long as women are overworked and underpaid in industries that threaten their health, prostitution will continue to seem the better option.

CROFTS. [stopping short, amazed] Wound up! **Wind up a business that's paying 35 percent in the worst years!** Not likely.
CROFTS. Only that you've always lived on it. It paid for your education and the dress you have on your back. Don't turn up your nose at business, Miss Vivie: **Where would your Newnhams and Girtons be without it?**
CROFTS [...] **Why the devil shouldn't I invest my money that way?** I take the interest on my capital like other people.
CROFTS. Come! **You wouldn't refuse the acquaintance of my mother's cousin the Duke of Belgravia because some of the rents he gets are earned in queer ways? You wouldn't cut the Archbishop of Canterbury, I suppose, because the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have a few publicans and sinners among their tenants. Do you remember your Crofts scholarship at Newnham?** Well, that was founded by my brother the M.P. He gets his 22 per cent out of a factory with 600 girls in it, and not one of them getting wages enough to live on. **How d'ye suppose they manage when they have no family to fall back on?** Ask your mother. And **do you expect me to turn my back on 35 per cent when all the rest are pocketing what they can, like sensible men?** No such fool! If you're going to pick and choose your acquaintances on moral principles, you'd better clear out of this country, unless you want to cut yourself out of all decent society.

Crofts' rhetorical questions, on the other hand, are meant to show the utter greed and materialism of the capitalist male society. The audience is exposed to the other perspective. Mrs. Warren's rhetorical questions are meant to draw the attention of the audience to women's lack of financial resources due to underpaying jobs which occasionally leads them to prostitution. However, for Crofts and his society, it is not financial need, but greed. He thinks of the prostitution as a very profitable business. His rhetorical questions to Vivie provoke the audience's thinking about the injustices of this male-dominated society which tailors laws that protect such businessmen.

VIVIE. Mother: suppose we were both as poor as you were in those wretched old days, **are you quite sure that you wouldn't advise me to try the Waterloo bar, or marry a laborer, or even go into the factory?**
VIVIE. **Isn't it part of what you call character in a woman that she should greatly dislike such a way of making money?**
VIVIE. **Are you really and truly not one wee bit doubtful — or — or — ashamed?**
VIVIE. **Do you know what the mathematical tripos means?** It means grind, grind, grind for six to eight hours a day at mathematics, and nothing but mathematics. PRAED [revolted] What a monstrous, wicked, rascally system! I knew it! I felt at once that it meant destroying all that makes womanhood beautiful!

Even Vivie is made to ask many questions as she, representing the New Woman who is free-thinking, independent and therefore able to secure a respectable position in society resents the idea that a woman should be treated as a

sex object. It shows her shock and her refusal to accept such logic. This shows that the New woman, given the opportunity to earn a decent living, would hardly accept to be treated as a commodity.

Conclusions

After comparing Treadwell's use of rhetorical questions to Shaw's use of the same stylistic tool to present their feminist views, it is found that there are no significant differences in the usage of rhetorical questions. Both female and male feminist playwrights use rhetorical questions to help trigger the audience's feelings, senses and imagination in more engaging and interesting ways. They help provoke the audiences thinking about women's state in society, in addition to stressing on the injustices of the patriarchy.

These results contradict with the three-model; Deficit/ Dominance/ Difference frameworks to language and gender in which women's language and stylistic tools are found to differ from those of men's. The present study's results, however, support the more recent post-modern approach to language and gender studies. This approach which brings to the forefront the "performance" notion claims that gender is not a fixed and stable characteristic of every individual.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study is only a step that paves the way for more research in feminist stylistics and language and gender studies in general. It opens the door for more studies to be conducted on more plays, using more stylistic tools to validate the final results. Then, as a more comprehensive step, test the same idea on different literary genres to find out if there are major stylistic differences between male and female authors in general, not just in writing plays, but also in short stories, novels, novellas, poems, etc.

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