A Stylistic Approach to Power Relation Shifts in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

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Abstract

The present paper tackles the concept of power relations and surveys some of the specific techniques, in which power relations are represented in the language of two major characters in Arthur Millers' *The Crucible.* The researcher adopts Brown and Levinson's (1978) Politeness theory and Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness to contrast the language of the two major characters, namely, John Proctor and Mary Warren. The objective of the study is to highlight how the two theories contrast each other and how they can be used to manifest the power embodied in the use of language. The study highlights how the characters in the text world gain power over their superordinate by examining their language that signifies social and religious power.

Keywords: Power relation**s**, Politeness, Impoliteness, Religious authority, *The Crucible*.

مدخل أسلوبي لتحولات علاقة القوة في مسرحية *البوتقة* لآرثر ميلر

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مستخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة مفهوم علاقات القوة كما تستعرض بعض التقنيات المحددة التي تعكس علاقات القوة في لغة شخصيتين رئيسيتين في مسرحية *البوتقة* لآرثر ميلر. يتبنى الباحث نظرية التأدب لبراون وليفينسون (1978) واللاتأدب لكولبيبر (2011) لمقارنة لغة الشخصيتين الرئيسيتين، وهما جون بروكتور وماري وارين. الهدف من الدراسة هو إبراز كيف تتباين النظريتان مع بعضهما البعض وكيف يمكن استخدامهما لإظهار علاقة القوة متجسدة في استخدام اللغة. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على كيف تكتسب الشخصيات في عالم النص القوة على مرؤوسيهم من خلال تحليل لغتهم التي تعكس القوة الاجتماعية والدينية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علاقات القوة، نظرية التأدب، نظرية اللا تأدب ، السلطة الدينية، *البوتقة.*

1. Introduction

The present paper tackles power relations between the two major characters in Arthur Millers' *The Crucible*, namely, John Proctor and Mary Warren, who represent two different social statuses as the former is superordinate and the latter is subordinate. The analyzed samples focus on the change in power relations between them, by explaining the language mechanisms that demonstrate their social status in the text. The language of both is examined with reference to the theory of Politeness by Brown and Levinson (1978) and Impoliteness by Culpeper (2011). The main text event that drives the change in power relations is the witch trial of Salem society. The significance of the trial is that it marks the turning point of the action, and helps in contrasting the shift in power relations among the characters.

2. Review of literature

Aziz and Qunayeer (2014) argue that Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is a purposeful theatrical reaction to the operations of Joseph McCarthy and his collaborators. They spotlight and analyze the theatricality of the McCarthy's trials through the frame of spectacle to show how Miller theatrically utilizes his play to highlight the negative effects of McCarthyism and the seemingly unquestioned frame of an American democracy, defending itself against Communist subversion. They argue that *The Crucible* intervenes in the political condition of its times. It is as though all relationships of characters here are governed by either advantage or disadvantage. The essential contrast between the present paper and Aziz and Qunayeer (2014) is that the aim of Aziz and Qunayeer's is to evaluate the relationship between two leading characters, husband, John Proctor, and wife, Elizabeth Proctor. While, the present paper tackles the concept of shift in power relations in two different layers of the society between a servant and her master, namely Mary and Proctor.

William McGill (1981) indicates that Miller attempts to provide a historical example to demonstrate that the sin of public terror based on the conscious of the readers. McGill contrast the events and characters of *The Crucible* with the real incidents of Salem witch trial in 1692, showing that Miller's changes in facts about Proctor and Abigail are due to the audience of the play in 1950, which helps the contemporary audience to engage easily with the historical period of the Puritans. For instance, both Abigail and Procter do not have the same characteristics in the text world, about their age and relationship. Abigail William, for example, is eleven-year-old, while Proctor is sixty. Miller adjusts the truth to make the audience accept the characters as he forges the sexual relation between these characters to make Proctor's suffering more accepted. On the other hand, the present paper investigates the turn taking between Proctor and his servant Marry to analyze shift in power relation in *The Crucible*.

Adrian Pablé (2007) discusses different linguistic features with reference to their occurrence in *The Crucible* and other given sources to compare in terms of textually. These features include verb forms regarding their aspect, tense, and structure; pronominal forms and plural forms; preposition and conjunction; and syntactic structures. For example, the use of "do" in different contexts of the play is compared with their counterpart examples in Shakespearean plays. He also studies the sociolinguistic factor of the multiple negation happening between the non-educated characters, concluding that this feature goes back to Salem's original documents. He, finally, suggests that Miller's rejection of the usual historical use of thou/you to mark the social hierarchy is to avoid the stereotypical feature of speech or historical prose. That rejection helps the readers to get involved by Miller's use of an accepted style of writing. He concludes that Miller can transmute the language of the past to embed it to his new context. The aim of the present study shares this linguistic purpose, yet with different target to achieve. While Pablé provides a historical linguistic analysis of the play, the present paper aims to depend on the analysis of shift in power.

The dialogues in the Crucible are interpreted in detail in accordance with the turn-control strategies, the Speech Act Theory, the Cooperative Principle, and the theory of Politeness (Mulyanto, Setiawan, & Kurnia, 2019). The researchers benefit from Critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate *The Crucible,* aiming of expounding how the characters use the communicative strategies. The purpose of the study is mainly educational of studying drama and teaching turn-control strategies to help the students communicate effectively after explaining the implication embodied in the language used in drame.

The present paper aims at differentiating between the power relation before and after the Witch trial in the text world of the Play, which is an aspect that neither of the previous studies highlight. Moreover, the presented paper provides an example of the shift in power among the society in the text world adopting two contrasted theories of politeness and impoliteness, since these two theories resemble a two side of the same coin, as they both are explained in terms of face threatening acts.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study is concerned with the following concept that is introduced by Culpeper (2011):

> Powerful participants not only do Impoliteness but are supported by the social structure— the power behind them— in doing so (e.g. the speaking rights afforded to a judge); in contrast, the less powerful participants are restricted by the social structure…. [T]hey are more likely to suffer
> loss without the ability to counter it. (p. 245)

In addition, multiple factors govern the use of Impoliteness (2011). For instance, Impoliteness is frequently used by less powerful participants to acquire status within a less powerful group through challenging other participants with markedly more social institutional power using techniques of Impoliteness. Hence, Politeness, as well as Impoliteness, can help in understanding the power relations in society. Therefore, the present study adopts an eclectic approach to benefit from the two mentioned theories, as Culpeper's Impoliteness is primarily an opponent of Brown and Levinson's politeness because both theories depend on the FTA. In addition, both theories can explain the power relation manifested in language especially, when it comes to the concept of positive and negative faces from which strategies are performed whether to save or to attack them.
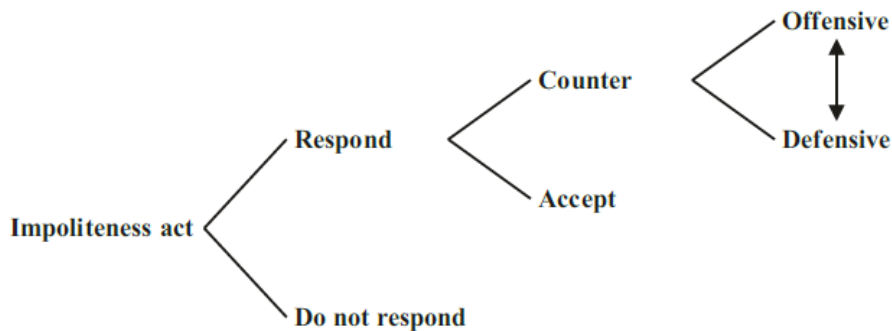
3.1 Politeness

Eelen (2001) presents Robin Lakoff as the originator of modern Politeness theories because she is the first to examine Politeness as a decidedly pragmatic theory. Lakoff defines Politeness as a "system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential of conflict and confrontation" (Eelen, 2001, p. 34). Politeness is mainly classified

according to three different ideologies: (a) the common-sense ideology, (b) scientific ideologies, and (c) social ideology (Eelen, 1999, p. 163). Social ideology, the most relevant ideology in the present paper, refers to principles having to do with certain features of social organization or social structure, such as the power relations of a society, and the values associated with them (Eelen, 1999, p. 164).

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), Politeness is either positive or negative. Positive Politeness means that the speaker is complimentary to the addressee, while negative Politeness is found in the various ways of mitigating an imposition, as seen in hedging, pessimism, or apologizing. Some speech acts threaten the hearer's negative face without the speaker's intention to avoid impeding the hearer's freedom. These acts include orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminders, threats, warnings, or dares. Disapproval, criticism, ridicule, complaint, and insult have also a negative evaluation of some aspects of the hearer's positive face. For instance, taboo topics, interruption, and being uncooperative in an activity show that the speaker does not care about the hearer. Such acts as responses to hearer's *faux pas*, ways of accepting offers, or expressions of thanks, excuses, and unwilling promises would also endanger the speaker's face. Damaging the speaker's positive face is risked by several acts, including apologies, self-humiliation, confession of guilt, or emotional leakage as laugh or tear.

3.2 Impoliteness

The home of Impoliteness studies is socio-pragmatics, which is a branch of pragmatics that is used into several other fields, but most notably communication studies and interactional sociolinguistics. Impoliteness is, partly, the result of the absence of Politeness rules, since Politeness and Impoliteness are juxtaposed strategies, especially when referring to Culpeper's (2013) and Brawn and Levinson's (1978) models. The following diagram explains how Culpeper frames the impolite response to an addressee:

```
                                                    Offensive
                                    Counter  <
                        Respond  <              Defensive
                      <
    Impoliteness act              Accept
                      <
                        Do not respond
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(Culpeper, Haugh, & Kádár, 2017, p. 213)

Culpeper (1996) distinguishes between five strategies, by which Impoliteness is presented between a speaker and an addressee. These strategies are: (a) bald on record, (b) positive impoliteness, (c) negative impoliteness, (d) sarcasm or mock, and (e) withhold impoliteness (Culpeper, pp. 356-358). Bald on record is the first strategy that the speaker may use when there is   risk of damaging the face and when he aims to damage the hearer's face. Therefore, the respective impolite utterances are performed in a direct and clear way. Secondly, to damage the hearer's positive face want through the positive impoliteness is employed. It can be seen in the acts of ignoring the other, or contradicting a supposedly common ground between the hearer and the speaker. Moreover, when the speaker intends to use inapt identity markers as avoiding using honorifics or selecting a sensitive topic that the hearer may avoid to talk about, are a positive impolite strategy. It can be also seen in being arrogant and cold with the hearer, and when using a vague language and inserting secretive and uncommon taboo words. Negative impoliteness is the third strategy that the speaker uses to attack the hearer's negative face want when scorning, frightening, ridiculing, and literally and/or metaphorically invading the hearer's space. Fourthly, sarcasm impoliteness, which is one of the sub-strategies, is superficially suitable and accepted, though it implies an opposite meaning by threatening the addressee's face. Fifthly, withhold politeness is a strategy that occurs when the speaker fails to perform politeness

where it is anticipated, such as keeping silent in a situation that demands expressing gratitude or thanking the hearer.

The use of devaluating or impolite terms evokes the positive effect on its user as they convey the superiority of the speaker over the addressee because power is not a stable status and must be maintained and acquired through different social interactions (Culpeper, 2013, pp. 19-20; for more explanation, see also Mohammed & Abbas, 2015, p. 199). Yet, the interpretation of an impolite term largely depends on the situation since using the same terms by different participants or in different situations can be regarded as polite or impolite terms due to the different circumstances of the situation. For example, the word *child* in addressing an adult might be offensive, while it is normal when addressing a child. Teenagers' shouting in the middle of a football game is not regarded as an impolite act, but it is in a classroom. Therefore, interpreting devaluating terms largely depends on the situation and the participants. The examination of the devaluating terms in the present study depends on Culpeper's model of Impoliteness. In sum, examining impoliteness and politeness between the two major characters in the play help in emphasizing the shifts in power relations.

3.3 Power relations

Mesthrie (2011) affirms that power is marked in languages and frequently used (p. 67). Moreover, Foucault (1986; as cited in Leavy, 2014) ascertains that power is a "relation" described through investigating its types as presented at different levels of society (p. 57). Foucault (as cited in Thorpe, et al., 2015) acknowledges that power is the major force that shapes social order, and the only different thing through time is how it is exercised. For instance, the state of a society level imposes its power on a man, whose relations with his children manifest themselves through different forms of power. Therefore, the use of language in a specific society is an evident on representation of power relations and their shifts between the member of that society.

Generally, Sociolinguistics elaborates on the question of "what", which investigates the nature of a sociolinguistic phenomenon in terms of the development of social power relationships, through raising the questions of how power is maintained and how it might be altered in favor of those who are controlled by (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 16). Leavy (2014) considers that societies are "conceptualized as organized webs of power relations, particularly featuring networks stemming from political power, military power, ideological power, and economic power" (p. 57). Specifically, integral to power is the social resources that a person can control, and his ability to make decisions that are seen in the actions of that person and usually represented in his language (Mesthrie, 2011, p. 160). Social power is, thus, not distributed equally (Wilson & Cervero, 2001, p. xi). Moreover, Wilson and Cervero state that power relations are never stable, but only reproduced and reshaped (p. 11).

Mann (as cited in Thorpe, et al., 2015) links the change in practicing power over others to the shifts in "sovereign exercise of power, such as public torture and executions," which are the ways of "authority figures in feudal society used to coerce their subjects into obedience" (p. 54). Foucault (as cited in Leavy, 2014) describes that "violence and force were seen as inhuman and, more importantly, as an ineffective means of exercising power" (p. 54). This means that the great political or social changes influence power relation shifts in the society. Those shifts are derived mainly by the exercise of power evident in the use of language.

To conclude, every society has its rules that control the bases of power relations and the causes of power relation shifts, since power is always subjected to different factors and is used for different purposes. Hence, power relations are never static; they are all but negotiable and reproduced (Wilson & Cervero, 2001, p. 11). Yet, according to Culpeper (2011) and Brawn and Levinson (1978), power relation shifts are represented in the language, and so are examined, regardless of the source or the purpose of power. The analysis here seeks to highlight the shift in power relations between

the two major characters in the play by interpreting the strategies of Politeness and Impoliteness used to acquire power.

4. Analysis

Power relations are determined by different factors, including social status. Yet, participants usually try to acquire more power by invading the freedom of others or by threatening them. Politeness and Impoliteness are, thus, apt tools to investigate the shift in power relations, as demonstrated in the next two exemplary extracts from Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. These two samples contain the same strategies adopted by Proctor and Mary through the whole text, which marks the shift in power relation between them. These examples represent the social statues between the two characters before and after the witch trial, which resemble not only the shift between these two characters but the shift occurring among most of the characters *in The Crucible*

Sample 1

Mary Warren: Oh! I'm just going home, Mr. Proctor.
Proctor: Be you foolish, Mary Warren? Be you deaf? I
forbid you to leave the house, did I not? Why shall I pay
you? I am looking for you more often than my cows!
Mary Warren: I only come to see the great doings in the world. 5
Proctor: I'll show you a great doin' on your arse one
　　　of these days. Now get you home; my wife is
　　　waitin' with your work! (*Trying to retain a shred
　　　of dignity, she goes slowly out*).
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Miller, 2002, pp. 21-22)

Sample 1 demonstrates an aspect of Politeness in the turn taking. The illocutionary acts, which are those of threatening and giving orders in "I'll show you a great doin' on your arse" (l. 6), indicate Proctor's superiority over Mary. The confirmation of such superiority comes with Mary's use of honorific (viz., *Mr*, l. 1), as the negative Politeness strategy shows. Proctor damages Mary's face

when he scorns her as in "Be you foolish, Mary Warren? Be you deaf?" (l. 2), which follows the negative impoliteness strategy of scorning the other. He does not only go bald on record in his direct verbal attack on Mary, calling her "foolish" and "deaf," but he also invades her personal freedom and dehumanizes her when he associates her to his property as cows (l. 4). Clearly, Proctor is superior to Mary, but his superiority is established by, among other strategies, his impolite attitude. Mary damages her own positive face as her justification to Proctor is a confirmation of this superiority (l. 5). Again, Proctor threatens and orders her to get back home (l. 7). Therefore, the power relations in the previous extract foregrounds Mary's subordinate status vis-à-vis Proctor's superiority.

This turn taking is also significant because of the shift in power relations that occurs in the text world as Mary gains power due to her role in the witch trial. Although Proctor's attitude against Mary is considered harmful, it could be typical of the text world that allows this stand towards women, especially servants. Nevertheless, Mary gains power as the action develops. This reveals how the law, manifested in religion, can empower those minor characters in the text world. The next sample highlights the shift in power relation after the witch trial starts.

Sample 2

Mary Warren: I must tell you, sir, I will be gone every
          Day now. I am amazed you do not see what
          weighty work we do.
Proctor: What work you do! It's strange work for a
          Christian girl to hang old women!   5
Proctor: I'll official you! (*He strides to the mantel, takes
          down the whip hanging there.*)
Mary Warren: *(terrified, but coming erect, striving for her
          authority)* I'll not stand to whip anymore!
Elizabeth (hurriedly, as Proctor approaches): Mary, promise
                                                              10
now you'll stay at home.

Mary Warren (*backing from him, but keeping her erect
posture, striving, striving for her way*): The Devil's loose
in Salem Mr. Proctor we must discover where he's hiding
Mary Warren (*pointing at Elizabeth*): I saved her life today!

15

(*Silence. His whip comes down.*)
Elizabeth: Who accused me?
Mary Warren: I am bound by law, I cannot tell it. (*To
Proctor*)
       I only hope you'll not be so sarcastic no more.
       Four judges and the King's deputy sat to dinner with
       us but an   20
       hour ago. I would have you speak civilly to me, from this
       out.
Proctor (*in horror, muttering in disgust at her*): Go to bed.
 Mary Warren (*with a stamp of her foot*): I'll not be ordered to
bed
no more Mr. Proctor! I am eighteen and a woman, however
single!
Proctor: Do you wish to sit up? Then sit up.   25
Mary Warren: I wish to go to bed!
     Proctor (*in anger*): Good night, then!

(Miller, 2002, pp. 62-63)

      This extract marks the contrast in power relations between
Mary Warren and Proctor. It is significant to link the shift in power
relations to the time when this turn taking occurs and how it
formulates a new shape of communication between the two
characters. The event that marks the change here is the witch trial
between Proctor, Elizabeth, and Mary in Salem society, for it reflects
a great development in power relations in the text world. Proctor
practices his superiority over Mary, as mentioned previously, yet
Mary takes advantage of the situation. In the opening line of Sample
2, she stresses that she is no longer submitted to Proctor, when she
said "I must tell you, sir, I will be gone every day," knowing that the

trial has a higher power over her master. Therefore, she allows herself to reject his commands.

The use of honorifics by Mary (l. 1) does not indicate a subordinate relation with Proctor, but a shift from a subordinate relation to an equal one since her language changes after she becomes a part of the witch trial. The omitted honorifics between Mary and Elizabeth as in "I saved *her* life today!" (l. 15) denote an equal-equal relationship between two supposedly different power-relation holders. As for her stand vis-à-vis Proctor, it is verbalized in her first utterance when she reluctantly uses a highly formal title of respect and calls him "sir," implicating that she is dealing with him in either an equal-equal or subordinate-superordinate non-solidary relation. The subordinate-superordinate relation could be interpreted as the remaining traces of Mary-Proctor first phase of power that comes to an end with the witch trial.

The shift in power relations is mostly witnessed in threatening Proctor's face. Firstly, Mary disapproves of Proctor's order about going to Salem (l. 1). Secondly, she complains about being whipped (l. 9). Thirdly, she is impolite in ignoring Elizabeth's order of staying at home, and she even does not reply to her, and says instead, "I am bound by law, I cannot tell it" (l. 17). Fourthly, she directly goes bald on record as she gives an order to Proctor saying, "Speak civil to me" (l. 21). Mary's disapproval, complaint, and ordering acts to Proctor and Elizabeth, ignoring their negative faces, make her appear as a powerful character. Thus, in the last two lines, Proctor tries to save his face by his approval of her complaints saying, "Do you wish to sit up" (l. 25). In turn, the law, which is empowered by the witch trial and by which she is bound, gives her the power to disobey her master. This is how she reshapes the relationship between her and the Proctors.

The shift in power relations among the characters in the previous extract represents the effects that occur after Mary manipulates the situation to benefit from the authority represented in the trial. The analysis here shows how she works it out to gain power over Proctor. It, thus, reveals the truth about the abuse of authority in

the text world. This abuse of the power is highlighted in the text world by the shift in power relation among the characters in the play. Most of the superior characters in the play suffer from these abuses, while the subordinate ones manage to benefit from it.

5. Conclusion

The analysis foregrounds the significance of power relations between the two major characters of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible.* Despite the social status, where Proctor is superordinate and Mary is subordinate, Mary gains power over her master immediately after the witchcraft. The samples analyzed show the change in power relations between them, as illustrated by the language mechanisms of gaining and maintaining power. The language of both characters resembles the change in the relation between them, as Mary revolts with impolite attitude towards her master who formally assaults her, whereas Proctor starts to respect Mary out of fear of her new social power. Politeness and Impoliteness theories help in investigating the turns, in which each character has the superiority over the other. Analyzing the samples with reference to the strategies presented in the two respective theories of Politeness and Impoliteness reveals that language uncovers the negotiable and reproduced shift in power in the significant text world. The shift in power relation is seen between other characters in the text world from the same social status. The two-mentioned theories provide an excellent tool of analyzing the power relation in most of the turn taking.

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