The Masculine and The Feminine in Arabic and the Illusion of the Unnecessary Proliferation of Words

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Abstract

This research investigates masculine and feminine in Arabic, aiming at highlighting the formal and semantic limits set by Arab linguists for each of them. Two further issues constitute the aim of this research: the first: the reality of the formal indicators of feminization, and the extent of their conformity with reality, The second is to explain the cause of the existence of these formal signs and to refute the idea of classical linguists that they came to restrict the proliferation of words. This research aims to clarify these elements associated with the idea of femininity in Arabic, and to indicate whether the masculine was originally feminine or not? And spot some formal masculinization as signs of femininity. The research reached a set of results, most notably that the formal signs of the feminine were not strict to the extent adopted by the classical Arab linguists; some Arabic signs of masculinization are not addressed by the classical linguists. It also concluded that the issue of unnecessary proliferationof words was not a suitable cause for the presence of signs of femininity, as the language is not incapable of generating words, nor burdened by it.

Keywords: masculine, feminine, unnecessary proliferation of words, formal signs

1. Introduction

Language seeks to offer its users a sufficient amount of knowledge and sense about words faced in the context of everyday language use; either at the level of the singular, duality and plural; at the level of masculinity and femininity; or at the level of structures of 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person, and so on. All these semantic manifestations Arabic has taken care of, taking it upon itself to distinguish between masculine and feminine, for example, which is the subject of researching in this paper, through formal and semantic signs that can ensure that the recipient can understand the mechanism of distinguishing between masculine and feminine in Arabic.

However, these signs have often not been strict, and the reason for their existence was not completely clear to the grammarians. The unnecessary proliferation words in the language was not a suitable explanation for the existence of signs of femininity in Arabic, hence this research came to address this issue.

1.1 Significance of the Research

It lies in the fact that it investigates an essential semantic element in Arabic, which is masculinization and feminization, while at the same time examining the validity of the justifications relied on by the classical linguists for the existence of formal signs of femininity in Arabic. Its significance also lies in the fact that it Monitors the presence of these signs and the validity of them to indicate the signified words they reference.

The problem of research is that there is confusion among scholars and linguists when they talk about the reasons for the presence of signs of feminization in Arabic. From the researcher's point of view, there is illusion that these reasons are related to fear of the unnecessary creation of new of words, which does not correspond to the reality of language. The research has sought to repute this fear, while detailing the signs of the feminine and the masculine.

1.2 Research Questions

The research tries to answer a major question: was the fear of new word unnecessary creation the real reason behind the presence of signs of feminization in the language? Based on this question, sub-questions have emerged: What is the concept of masculine and feminine? And how does language deal with each of them? And what are the signs of feminization in Arabic?

1.3 Aims of the Research

This research aims to clarify what is meant by masculine and feminine in Arabic, and to highlight the formal and semantic indicators set by linguists for them. It also aims to indicate the formal signs of femininity in Arabic, while exploring the validity of these signs in the actual linguistic use. The research also tries to highlight the masculinization signs overlooked by classical linguists.

The research also aims at the investigation of the assumption made by Arab linguists that the signs of feminization came for fear of the unnecessary proliferation of words, as the adhered grammatical rule states that each masculine has feminine that does not share the same form. The research tries to validate this notion.

1.4 Research Method

This research follows a systemic analytical descriptive approach, starting with monitoring the phenomenon, then collecting sufficient information about it, developing observations and hypotheses, testing the observations and hypotheses, and eventually reaching to valid results.

With regards to research material, it has become available by extrapolating what the ancient linguists wrote about masculine and feminine, and about the formal signs that distinguish the feminine from the masculine, as well as the set of examples and models mentioned in the research through the daily use language of Arabic.

1.5 Concepts Related to the Present Research

The research mainly deals with three important concepts related to the main argument made:

• MASCULINE refers to WHAT holds SIGN OF the masculine in REALITY Or in metaphor. The former has the masculine aspects anatomically AND THE latter is THAT of which LINGUISTS HAVE BEEN TERMED AS A MASCULINE BECAUSE OF ITS LACK OF SIGNS OF FEMINIZATION (AL AL-HRO, 1999).

• Feminine denotes the meaning of feminine, in reality or in metaphor, as the former has the feminine aspects anatomically and the metaphor and the latter is followed by the sign of feminization (Anbari, 1996).

• Unnecessary creation of new words refers to what the ancient linguists pointed out as that the language created signs of feminization so that the words of the language do not multiply, so that each masculine is feminine of his own pronunciation and is increased by the sign of feminization.

1.6 Related Literature

Studies on the subject by the classical linguists have addressed the issue of feminine and masculine in Arabic in not so much different fashion. Basically, they focus on aspects of semantic distinction between masculine and feminine, without researching the nature of the phenomenon itself.

Hammoud bin Hammad Al-Rubaie's study (2021) entitled 'The Masculine and the Non-Real Feminine: Uses and Contradictions from the Point of View of Modernists', a research published in Darat King Abdulaziz Journal.

This research deals with non-real masculine in general, and shows the semantic contexts that are related to the use of masculine and feminine. It also discusses the views of modernists on the subject.

This study converges with the aims of the present research as they deal with talking about masculine and feminine, signs of feminization in Arabic, and contexts of feminization, but the current research is characterized by investigating the validity of these signs at the use level of language, and the relationship of these signs to the unnecessary proliferation of words as addressed by classical linguists.

Amjad Talafha and Abdul Hamid Al-Aqtash's study (2016), entitled 'Principles of Arabic in Feminizing and Masculinizing Names: A View into the Learning DIfficulty', published in the Journal of Arts and Social Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman.

This study aims at investigating the learning difficulties associated with the masculinizing and feminizing in Arabic. A purely educational study, it deals with teaching methods that make it easier for the teacher to introduce his students the idea of distinguishing between masculine and feminine.

Fasel Salem Al-Issa's study (2013) entitled 'Methods of Identifying the Feminine in Arabic: published in the Journal of the Islamic University of Humanities Research.

This research shows the linguistic methods adopted by Arabic to determine the feminine in speech, whether related to the noun, the verb or the article, demonstrating views about the collection plural feminine structures of Arabic and feminine pronouns, as these signs are considered one of the methods of distinguishing the feminine in Arabic.

Ibrahim Barakat's study (1988), entitled 'Feminization in the Arabic Language.' This study aims to describe the phenomenon of feminization in Arabic, in terms of its nature, methods of using feminine signs, and acoustically feminine words. The study did not address the notion of the reproduction of words, or the validity of the use of feminine signs in Arabic.

Ismail Amira's study (1986), entitled 'The Phenomenon of Feminization between Arabic and Semitic Languages' aimed at comparing Arabic methods of feminization with other Semitic languages, and was not only specialized in talking about Arabic, in the sense that this study revolves around comparing the Arabic method of expressing feminine, and the methods of other Semitic languages in expressing it as well.

It appears from the above that all previous studies have focused on the nature of the masculine and feminization in Arabic, showing its most prominent formal signs, and discussing the manifestations of true and figurative feminization.

This research is divided into three sections, the first of which deals with the concept of masculine and feminine in Arabic and most important features. The second section deals with the signs of linguistic femininity and the validity of being compatible with the linguistic use, while listing some masculine signs in Arabic. The third section deals with the illusion of the unnecessary proliferation of words that classical linguists made of as a reason for the existence of signs of femininity in Arabic.

2. Nature of Masculine and Feminine in Arabic

The recognition of masculine and feminine in the Arabic language by Arabic scholars is based on the idea that each one has its own unique distinguishing features.

Arabic differentiates between masculine and feminine by several linguistic devices: such as adding feminine or masculine signs to the verb based on gender of the agent, which is the same with adjectives. Further, some syntactic cases result from the overall presence of gender in the sentence such as the case with feminine nouns that become indeclinable. This has prompted the classical linguists to distinguish between masculine and feminine so that they can properly present the language. Linguists elaborate that the feminine originate from the masculine in Arabic, that is, Arabic initialized the use of words with masculine origin without the feminine, then language observed the existence of the feminine, so it expressed it as well. This results from a logical reasoning for the issue as Sībawayh (1988) showed that everything expressed in speech is something, whether masculine or feminine, and the 'thing' is initially a masculine.

Al'Anbari (1996; p65) confirms this where he says that the origin of the feminine is masculine which lacks the feminine linguistic signs explicitly or implicitly.

In addition to the fact that the masculine is the origin of the feminine according to the views of the classical linguists, the rank of the masculine is also higher than the rank of the feminine, and this comes from the masculine originated the feminine. This notion presently supported by grammarians who came after Sībawayh, including Ibn Jenny, Al-'Al-Anbari, Al-Istrabati, Syuti and others (Ibn Jenny, Al-'Al-Anbari; 1996, Al-Istrabati; 2004, and Al-Siouti).

Their definition of the masculine was only formal; the nonexistence of sign of feminization in a word either in form or virtually (Al-Anbari, 1996), while the feminine contains the sign of femininity in form or virtually.

The previous definition for the masculine and feminine relies on the formal sign of masculinization and feminization. That is, a word that contains feminine sign is a masculine one and vice versa. Generally, that was not enough identification mechanism for the masculine and feminine according to the classical linguists. The definition went beyond form to consider the anatomical categorization of each the feminine and masculine. They recognized such categorisation as proper masculinisation and proper feminisation. However, words classified as feminine or masculine while not submitting to the above rule were classified as improper feminine and improper masculine (Al-Anbari 1996).

Despite these the descriptors for the categorisation of feminine and masculine formally and semantically, some words do not submit to these rules. Words like finger, arm and thigh in Arabic are some examples. These words were classified as feminine and masculine depending on what has been transferred from Arabic speakers disregard of these rules (Alharawy 1999).

The rules set for the categorization for feminine and masculine in Arabic are evidently not sufficient, as some words may appear to be valid for feminine categorization while in fact they are not. This highlights a confusion in the way a word is said to be feminine or masculine. That is, the irregularities appear in such categorizations lead to perceiving the views of the classical linguists as invalid regarding the issue of femininisation and masculinisation.

Arabic is keen to differentiate the masculine from the feminine, when using various words. This goes beyond the identification of the person or object being the topic of discourse, signs of feminization's are many, such as Taa At-Taanith in arabic which follows the verb in the past form to indicate the feminine agent. This has been also widened

by the use of the pronouns in addressing people or objects depending on whether this is a masculine or feminine (Al-Issa, 2013).

Ancient linguists have been concerned with the notion that masculine and feminization. They devoted a number of works to this, and devoted some detailed rules in dealing with masculine and feminine, as happened, for example, in masculinizing and feminizing the act based on gender of the agent and

3. Signs of the Feminine in Arabic

Based on the recognition of the masculine being an origin for the feminine, then it is perceived that there is no actual need for signs to distinguish words categorized as masculine. This means that an existence of signs that lead to the categorization of a word as being feminine is necessary. These signs suffix words. A list of these signs can be as follows: Taa Marbuta (ة), Alex Mqsura (ى), and Alef Mamduda followed by Hamza (اء). These signs may also suffix improper feminine words too (Al-Faraa 1976, Al'Anbari 1996). Other linguists list more signs like Tea Maftuha (ت) in feminine pluralization and some nouns in Arabic, And Kasra (ِ) in some pronouns. Yet a consensus amongst linguists was nonexistent (Abu Hayyan 1998). Modernists recognized these as being ways to express femininity but not signs for feminization (Al'Issa 2013). However, these signs have been made as indicators for the feminine and any word that does not contain any of them have been considered masculine (Al-Zamakhshari 1993).

This issue gets more complicated as some words may properly be classified as both feminine and masculine like سوق (marketplace) for example (Al-Sakhawi 1995), اللسان (tongue) (Ibn Malik 1990), letters of the Arabic alphabet (Al-Sa'igh 2004).

Such words may either be categorized as feminine or masculine while they have no signs to confirm a fixed categorization. This means that the rules set for this purpose are not always in fact valid, considering that these signs serve no purpose when they do not offer any benefit to a proper categorization for all words of Arabic into feminine and masculine. A further complication rises when some signs of feminisation suffix masculine words. For Example, Taa Marbuta (ة) suffixes masculine proper names such as عقبة (Oqbah), حمزة (Hamza) etc. These words have been labelled as formal feminine words according to linguists and grammarians., that is these words are masculine however the feminine signs suffix them (Ibn Al-Hajib 1989; Al-Shatibi 2007).

Such confusion necessitates reconsidering these signs due to the lack of rule governing them. Such a situation is problematic for researchers and learners as well.

Linguists in this context have contributed to the study of the feminine and the signs that distinguish it from the masculine, while the latter has received little to no attention, taking into consideration the understanding of linguists and grammarians of the masculine as being the origin of the feminine, hence there is no need to examine what possibilities might be there worth of studying such as signs that distinguish it from the feminine. However, some signs do exists like Waw (و) in masculine plural in Arabic standing as a sign that differentiate it from the feminine. Another example is the two-letter suffix for the dual in Arabic like (عطشان) or thirsty in English.

The suffix (ان) is particular to the masculine, however some may argue that some other words are followed by the same two letters, such as the last two letters in إنسان (human). The response to this argument is that the ending in such words has nothing to do with the word being either feminine or masculine, similar to the cases where the signs of the feminine may suffix words that are categorized as masculine.

A further counterargument to the above issue is that the same suffix may be attached to the ending of masculine proper nouns such as the proper noun عثمان (Othman), however feminine proper names are derived from masculine origins. This applies to all feminine proper names in Arabic that ends with the suffix (ان), that is they are all derived from a masculine origin. Further, the same suffix is discussed within the linguistic circles with regards to animals, as the reference is made to the male wolf as ثُعْبان and similarly with other words like أفْعُوان (male snake) etc (Al-Nahhas 2004, Ibn Khalawayh 1979).

One further sign that refers to the masculine in Arabic is words that corresponds in terms of rhyme to the English word 'under', like أحمر (red) أبيض (white). Grammarians have not come to the mentioning of this rhythmic form as being specific to the masculine in Arabic (Ibn Al-Khabbaz 2007).

Linguist and grammarians have not come to the mentioning of these signs as being specific to the masculine, yet the arguments was restricted to the discussion of the origin of the feminine being masculine. However, I argue that this claim is invalid, as my argument goes, if the feminine is originally masculine, then there is no need for the masculne to have signs of its own. Arabs have disagreed on the masculinity or femininity of some words.

Linguists were prompted to ignore the masculine signs that they put in the original rule that the masculine is the origin

of the feminine, consequently a masculine does not need any signs to distinguish it from the feminine, signs, and therefore if they investigated the masculine signs they would have brought themselves into contradiction, and they would have to search the original from which the masculine was taken.

4. The Allusion of Creating New Words

Arabic has sought to create feminine words for the masculine words without the need for deriving the feminine from the same formal structure of the masculine, so for example رجل (man) is feminized to امرأة (woman) and so on. This is confirmed by the arguments made by classical linguists on the subject (Al-Anbari 1996).

This means that each masculine word has been allocated a feminine word that is linguistically not derived from it. This may have led to the unnecessary proliferation of words in Arabic. The same viewed is supported by classical linguists and grammarians. They also ascribed the existence of feminine signs as an attempt by the language to create new words, that is the language was concerned about the unnecessary flower proliferation of words and then the unlimitedness of the lexicon, therefore the tendency was made to derive the feminine from the masculine not by creating new words, rather by adding a feminine sign (Alnahhas 2005). These signs suffix words to refer to the feminine (Al-Anbari 1996).

The question is: does the language show much concern to create new words? Can the language be unable to create new words without resorting to suffixing words to make them feminine?

I argue there is no connection between formal signs and the unnecessary proliferation of words. It stands as an allusion on the part of classical linguists of Arabic to justify the existence of such signs. Any language can not be said to be incapable of generating new words to refer to various signified objects, concepts, abstractions etc, or even to make reference to the masculine or the feminine. Also a language can not be said to be burdened by the size of its lexicon. I argue that the existence of signs of the feminine is ascribed to feminize the adjectives of nouns not to feminize the masculine itself.

A deeper look into words that are suffixed by feminine signs reveals that they are not created for the purpose of adding more words to the lexicon, and for the case of the adjectives, for exampl, two adjectives can not be said to make the same reference to a single meaning that describes an object, concept or abstraction. That is, adjectives are made feminine because they describe a feminine. Therefore, it is valid to assume that the feminine signs in Arabic suffix adjectives for a feminine. The same applies to adjectives that have turned to proper noun like فاطمة (Fatemah.) The feminine sign in these words was originally attached to adjective for a feminine, over time the adjective have been perceived as a proper nouns. Thus, our earlier assumption seems to get some evidence; the feminine signs are originally suffixes for adjectives for a feminine.

In support for the above assumption - the nonexistence of connection between the proliferation of new words and the creation of the feminine signs - Sībawayh gives an example for the word ربت (transliterated as Dharabat), and moving ahead to make this word a name for a female, then a further one more derivation is made but to fit a woman with small body, for example, then the feminine sign will surely appear to refer to the same female, considering this form is an adjective (Sībawayy 1988).

One further evidence for feminine signs not being a result of the unnecessary unnecessary proliferation of new words is that the same signs can suffix masculine words. Some examples can be قتيبة (Qutaiba), Hamza (حمزة) and so on. Is this also an instance where the language deters from creating new words? The feminine signs suffix words that refer to a female of a male origin, like نمرة، ضبعة، كلبة, and these words are in fact have been erroneously made into feminine as the proper feminine form is available without the addition of the feminine signs to the masculine form.

Thus, many of the names that revolve on the tongues of the sons of the language do not know their true feminine, which was set by the language, so they limited themselves to the trouble of searching for that real feminine by attaching the sign of femininity after the name of the masculine, ignorant of the original feminine name Not described, that is, the Arabs treated some names as adverb on the name, so they attached them to the feminine sign accordingly.

Hence, it can be said that what the classical linguists embraced of the statement of the reason for the existence of feminine signs in Arabic that - that is, the language - was concerned of the multiplication of words. Hence, the sign of femininity that follows some word which indicates their feminization, is not entirely true. Any language Verbalism, as for the signs of femininity, are often attached to attributes to indicate the feminization of the adjective, or the names that have been mismeasurable to the adjective because the speaker does not know its feminine form. This phenomena is developed by the language, and so the idea of creating new words is only an illusion) Ibn Yaish 2001).

5. Conclusion

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the concept of masculine and feminine in Arabic?

It has been clearly defined as being anatomically feminine (mainly sexually) and at the same time lacking the linguistic signs of the feminine. On the other hand, the masculine is defined as being what is anatomically is a male (sexually as well) while the signs of the feminine are nonexistent.

- Are there really linguistic signs for masculine and feminine in Arabic?

While linguists have envisaged signs for the feminine, the masculine has been ascribed none. In this study seems to bring the rule put by linguists to much confusion. This concepts has been proposed by linguists which is formal in nature in attempt to restrict the argument and to make it simpler and direct.

Direct linguistic use confirms this idea. The words ending with Alex and Noon often refer to masculine, such as thirsty) عطشان(and others, as well as red (أحمر).

- Have the formal feminine signs only strict in indicating femininity of words?

As we have seen in this study, these signs are not restricted to the feminine as they may suffix purely masculine words. This brings the rule set by the linguists to much confusion. This would lead to confusion if applied to the rules set by linguists as far as signs of feminization is concerned.

- What are the actual reason(s) for the existence of signs of feminization in Arabic? As we have seen in this study, I argue that linguists have claimed that the signs of the feminine exist to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of words.

- I argue that these signs are made available for the adjective to describe a feminine which undermines the claims made by classical linguists.

- Further, language users may have no idea of the existence of feminine words for the masculine ones, as a result of this they may erroneously suffix masculine words with feminine signs.

- One further argument to be made in this context is that language is not to be said incapable of creating new words without resorting to assigning feminine signs to the masculine. As shown in this study, language is capable of doing so with reliance on creating words that are not originally derived from other words.

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