BILINGUAL PUBLISHING GROUP

Forum for Linguistic Studies
https://journals.bilpubgroup.com/index.php/fls

ARTICLE

Translating Power: Female Voice Beyond Gender Norms in the Novel Zinah

Tika Fitriyah *, *Mangatur Nababan*, *Riyadi Santosa*, *Muhammad Yunus Anis*

Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the language use of female characters in Nawal El Saadawi's Zinah, specifically examining how their speech reflects male linguistic patterns. Using Coates' theoretical framework, the study finds that 55.43% of the utterances made by female characters exhibit traits traditionally associated with male language, indicating a deliberate negotiation of gendered social roles within a patriarchal society. Additionally, through a translation analysis based on Molina and Albir's techniques, the study highlights the roles of discursive creation, generalization, and literal translation in reshaping representations of linguistic authority. A novel linguistic feature, "aggressive language," is introduced, which not only captures bold expressions but also encompasses verbal confrontations and challenges to the authority of interlocutors. This research contributes to the broader understanding of the intersection of language, gender, and power in Arabic sociolinguistics and calls for more gender-aware translation practices, emphasizing the translator's role in ensuring balanced gender representation in cross-cultural discourse. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the ongoing discourse on gendered language use, particularly in Arabic literature, by introducing new insights into how language shapes and reflects gender power dynamics. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for more nuanced translation practices that consider the implications of gendered language features, which can influence the social and cultural impact of translated works.

Keywords: Arabic Sociolinguistics; Gendered Language; Language and Power; Translation Studies

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:
Tika Fitriyah, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia; Email: tikafitriyah15@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO
Received: 19 May 2025 | Revised: 9 June 2025 | Accepted: 16 June 2025 | Published Online: 15 July 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i7.10087

CITATION
Fitriyah, T., Nababan, M., Santosa, R., et al., 2025. Translating Power: Female Voice Beyond Gender Norms in the Novel Zinah. Forum for Linguistic Studies. 7(7): 656–669. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i7.10087

COPYRIGHT
Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

1. Introduction

Language serves as a mirror of social and cultural frameworks. An individual's manner of speaking, lexical choices, and modes of communication often embody the values, norms, and hierarchical structures present within society. Consequently, language not only reflects these societal elements but also has the capacity to shape individual perceptions and behaviors [1,2]. Language shapes the way we see the world and it is language that shapes the way the world views us. One of the social and cultural factors closely related to language is gender. The study of language and gender is one of the interdisciplinary fields, which aims to provide answers to the question do men and women speak differently?[3]

Linguistic research indicates that women often employ language features that reflect a sense of insecurity, which is attributed to their historically subordinate position in society. Women tend to use more polite forms of expression, indirect commands, and avoid taboo language or swearing as strategies to mitigate dominance in conversations and prevent appearing overly assertive. Furthermore, women are more inclined to use language that highlights social relationships and fosters solidarity [4,5], because that is the purpose of the communication that women want to build. In addition, women also frequently use hedges and tag questions that reflect uncertainty or a desire to seek affirmation from others [6–8]. Research highlights that men and women often exhibit different communication styles, which can vary significantly across cultures. These differences are not only in content but also in manner of speaking [9].

As for men, they tend to use language features that show their confidence, as a reflection of their role in society, which is considered to have 'power'. Research has found that men tend to use language that is more direct and asserts their opinions [4,8]. Men may use language that emphasizes independence and competitiveness, and they also have different interests and topics when speaking [4].

This study explores the use of language by Arab women as reflected in literary works. Gender relations in the Arab world present a compelling subject for investigation. Patriarchal attitudes are prevalent among men in Arabia, who often justify gender discrimination through religious texts. Men typically occupy dominant positions in both public and private domains. Culturally, there is a pronounced emphasis on family values, honor, and conflict resolution within extended families, which collectively serve to reinforce asymmetrical gender relations [10,11]. As such, women in Arab culture face multifaceted discrimination rooted in patriarchal norms, religious interpretations, and socio-political contexts. Arab women are often positioned within patriarchal frameworks that limit their roles to traditional family duties, restricting their autonomy and opportunities for self-actualization. Women's right to freedom of expression is crucial to their emancipation. However, these rights are often under attack, limiting their ability to advocate for themselves and fully participate in community development [12–14].

This study employs the male language features framework developed by Coates [4] to examine how female characters are constructed through speech styles typically associated with masculinity. By analyzing linguistic features such as the use of direct commands, conversational dominance, assertive lexical choices, and sentence structures that convey authority, this research seeks to uncover whether these female characters challenge traditional gender stereotypes or, conversely, reproduce masculine norms within specific social contexts. This approach provides a deeper understanding of how gender identities can be negotiated, maintained, or contested through linguistic practices.

Understanding the relationship between language and gender is also important in cross-cultural contexts. Each language has a unique way of expressing and treating gender, which can reflect underlying cultural values. For example, some languages have complex grammatical gender systems, while others may be more gender neutral. These differences can affect how speakers of those languages understand and conceptualize gender.

Based on this, women's speech in the novel *Zinah* was also examined. The analysis employed the theory of translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir [15]. These techniques served as the basis for identifying shifts in linguistic features. A critical consideration in this study is the impact of translation techniques on the representation of gendered identities. The choice of technique can fundamentally determine whether the depiction of female characters' masculinity is preserved, reshaped, or erased

in the target text. Insensitivity to gendered nuances during the translation process risks diluting the characters' agency, distorting their social identities, and introducing or amplifying stereotypes that are absent in the source material. Thus, a gender-aware translation approach is essential to maintaining the integrity of the original characterization and ensuring that the power dynamics embedded in the source text are accurately conveyed to the target audience.

Based on this background, the research questions are:

1. What are the male language features used by female characters in Zinah?
2. How do translation techniques influence the shift in masculine female speech in translated texts?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Language and Gender

Research on language and gender began with Robin Lakoff's seminal work, Language and Woman's Place [6], which laid the foundation for understanding the relationship between language and gender. Lakoff argued that language reflects and reinforces power differences between men and women, with women's speech often characterized by politeness and hedging, thereby reinforcing their subordinate position in society. Subsequently, many linguists have examined the connection between language and gender, expanding on and challenging Lakoff's ideas.

Sally McConnel-Ginet explored how ideologies are constructed through language, emphasizing the relationship between subjectivity, attitudes, and language. She highlighted how linguistic practices not only reflect but also perpetuate societal gender norms, underlining the power of language in shaping gendered identities [16].

Janet Holmes [17] further contributed to this discourse by focusing on the central role of women's language in politeness theory, an aspect often overlooked, particularly in relation to power dynamics. Holmes illustrated how women, through their use of language, both adhere to and challenge societal expectations, using language as a tool to maintain harmony or navigate hierarchies in interpersonal relationships.

From an intercultural communication perspective, Deborah Tannen [18] emphasized the importance of cultural differences in women's language. She identified significant variations in how men and women use language, arguing that women tend to focus on building relationships through communication, while men often use language to achieve goals or assert status. Tannen's work highlights how gendered communication styles are shaped by cultural and social contexts, influencing both personal and professional interactions.

2.2. Male Language Feature

Initially, linguistic studies largely overlooked the differences in male and female speech patterns. However, as discussed in the previous subsection, feminist research has significantly contributed to revealing that language not only reflects social differences but also reinforces male dominance over women. These linguistic differences do not merely mirror the social positions of men and women; they also contribute to shaping and maintaining them. Social pressures further constrain the linguistic choices available to both genders, serving as a mechanism of social control over women [19]. This study employs male language features to examine how female characters are constructed through speech styles typically associated with masculinity.

Men have power over language to determine meaning and they show their power in the language they use during interactions. The following features of male language are partly discussed by Lakoff [6] and partly developed by Coates [4]: More Assertive, Short Answer, Interruption, Command and Directive, and Question. Regarding the last feature, Coates explains that men usually ask questions to ask for information, while women ask questions for several things including to invite others to participate, to introduce new topics, to find out other people's views on certain topics or for provocation.

2.3. Translation Technique

Molina and Albir distinguish between translation methods, techniques and strategies. Translation technique is a method used by translators to analyze and classify the equivalence of a translation from various aspects, starting from words, phrases, clauses and sentences. There are 5 basic characteristics in translation

techniques, namely.

Translation techniques affect the translation result; Translation techniques are classified based on comparison with the original text; Translation techniques affect the text unit in micro level; Translation techniques are basically discursive and contextual; Translation techniques are functional. The following translation techniques are summarized by Molina and Albir [20]: Adaptation, Amplification, Borrowing, Kalke, Compensation, Description, Discursive creation, Customary equivalence, Generalization, Linguistic Amplification, Linguistic compression, Literal translation, Modulation, Particularization, Reduction, Substitution, Transposition, and Variation.

2.4 Translation Shifts

The use of inappropriate translation techniques can lead to shifts. These shifts refer to changes at the level of linguistic features caused by the misapplication of translation strategies. Such shifts occur when masculine linguistic features previously used by female characters are omitted, resulting in a blurred or neutralized gender identity in the target text. This situation highlights that the translator's understanding and ability to convey gendered expressions plays a significant role in determining the quality and accuracy of cross-cultural literary translation.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This research is called descriptive research, which is the description of data based on certain categories, as well as developing concepts derived from data that have been observed, classified and interpreted in accordance with the relationship between categories to produce contextual patterns of unique cultural phenomena, so that the description can be more detailed and can be considered to be applied elsewhere, so that in addition to being descriptive, it is also explanatory, argumentative and conclusive [21]. Based on this description, this research is called descriptive research because it aims to understand, explain and describe linguistic phenomena, especially the language features of men in the Novel Zinah and its translation with the title Zeina.

3.2. Research Instrument(s)

Data were obtained through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and a questionnaire. In this study, the FGD served as a means to assess translation quality at the micro level, particularly focusing on the translation techniques that may influence the accuracy of the target text. Nababan et al. [22] recommend involving three informants (an odd number) to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment. According to them, the informants must meet specific criteria based on the aspect being evaluated. Since this research focuses solely on accuracy as a basis for identifying translation shifts, the assessors were required to be professional translators with experience in translating scientific texts. They also had to possess strong translation competence—including linguistic, discourse, cultural, and subject-matter expertise—along with sound declarative and procedural knowledge. In this study, the selection of the three informants was based on their expertise in the field of translation, as demonstrated through their professional portfolios, which are accessible via their academic profiles on platforms such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, or the websites of the institutions with which they are affiliated.

During the Focus Group Discussion, the informants referred to a pre-prepared questionnaire. The questionnaire in this study was designed to collect data on linguistic features, translation techniques, and the shifts occurring during the translation process. Through this instrument, information was systematically obtained from the informants regarding the linguistic characteristics in the source language, the techniques used to translate these features, and the types of shifts that resulted from the inappropriate selection of translation techniques. The data gathered via the questionnaire allowed for an in-depth analysis of translation tendencies and helped identify patterns of shifts that reflect changes in gender perspectives between the source and target languages. The **Table 1** is an example of the research instrument used in this study:

Table 1. Instrument Research.

No	Data		Translation	Male Feature	Technique of Translation	Translation Shift
	Source Language	**Target Language**				
1	أنا لست جسدا يا أستاذ، أنا عقل بفكر، أنا كاتبة مرموقة، هل قرأت كتابي في النقد الأدبي؟ ألا تقرأ مقالاتي في الصحف؟"	Aku bukan hanya sebuah tubuh. Aku adalah otak yang berpikir. Aku adalah penulis terkenal. Sudahkah kau membaca bukuku tentang kritik sastra? Atau membaca artikelku di koran	"I am not merely a body. I am a thinking mind. I am a renowned writer. Have you read my book on literary criticism? Or my articles in the newspaper?	More assertive	Variation, Explicitation, Establish Equivalent, modulation, reduction	Yes

3.3. Data collection and Analysis

Research data were collected through documentation. A total of 92 utterances by female characters were identified, 51 of which contained male language features. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing those 51 utterances. Coates' theory of male language features was employed to examine the speech characteristics of female characters who are presumed to possess speaking power. Meanwhile, the translations were analyzed using Molina and Albir's theory of translation techniques. The data were validated through a group discussion forum involving three experienced translation experts.

4. Results

4.1. Feminine Language in a Masculine World

In contemporary studies of language and gender, gender is understood not as a fixed biological category, but as a social construct that is shaped and negotiated through everyday interactions. Holmes and Meyerhoff [23] emphasize that gender is not merely "reflected" in language but is actively "constructed" through linguistic practices. Through the novel Zinah, Nawal seeks to create female characters who possess power traditionally associated with men, a dynamic that is reflected in the language used by the female characters.

Of the 92 utterances by female characters in the novel *Zinah*, 51 were found to contain male language features. This indicates that the author constructs female characters who also exhibit power, although the difference is only 11%. Four out of the six male language features identified by Lakoff and Coates were used by the female characters. In addition, one speech feature that is not categorized within the existing theory of male language features—namely, aggressiveness—was also identified. The research results are presented in the **Table 2**.

Table 2. Male Language Features Spoken By Female Characters.

No.	Male Language Feature	N	Persentage (%)
1	More Assertive	14	15.22
2	Short Answer	5	5.43
3	Interruption	0	0
4	Command and Directive	9	9.78
5	Swearing and taboo language	0	0.00
6	Question	14	15.22
7	Aggressive	9	9.78
	Total	51	55.43

The data in the table shows that male language features are not only spoken by male characters, but also by female characters. The use of masculine linguistic features by female characters indicates that the author deliberately constructs female figures who represent resistance against traditional gender norms. This also affirms their position as active subjects in negotiating power and identity within a patriarchal social structure. In the context of Arab society, which is deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions, this linguistic resistance becomes even more significant. By appropriating male-associated language, female characters challenge the dominant discourses that have historically

silenced or marginalized women. This subversion of gendered language reflects a broader critique of the power imbalance inherent in Arab patriarchal norms, where language itself becomes a site of struggle for agency and self-representation.

4.1.1. More Assertive

Men are generally inclined to use language that is assertive, direct, and confident when expressing opinions, beliefs, or facts. Several studies have indicated that, from an early age, girls are often explicitly or implicitly taught that being outspoken is considered "unfeminine." Behaviors such as arguing, challenging authority, or raising one's voice are socially discouraged in girls, leading many to become hesitant or reluctant to express their opinions openly [4]. From the analyzed data, female characters used this feature 14 times, or equivalent to 15.22%.

Example 1:

Source Language "أنا لست جسدا يا أستاذ، أنا عقل بفكر، أنا كاتبة مرموقة، هل قرأت كتابي في النقد الأدبي؟ ألا تقرأ مقالاتي في الصحف؟" [24]

Target Language: "Aku bukan hanya sebuah tubuh. Aku adalah otak yang berpikir. Aku adalah penulis terke_nal. Sudahkah kau membaca bukuku tentang kritik sastra? Atau membaca artikelku di koran?" [25]

Translation: "I am not merely a body. I am a thinking mind. I am a renowned writer. Have you read my book on literary criticism? Or my articles in the newspaper?

The utterance expresses the speaker's confidence. At the beginning of his speech he emphasized that he is not just a body, but a thinking brain. This is expressed to show his existence as a human being. The speaker also has a positive assessment of himself. After that, he also explained the fact that he had written books and articles in the newspaper, both of which were concrete evidence of his existence as a famous writer.

Through her speech, Shofi attempts to challenge the traditional image of a woman by boldly articulating her arguments, expressing herself with confidence, and engaging in verbal resistance against her interlocutors.

Linguists such as Coates [4], Holmes [17], and Tannen [18] argue that women tend to use rapport talk, which emphasizes the building and maintenance of social relationships, while men are more likely to engage in report talk, which focuses on asserting status, dominance, and conveying information. As a result, women are generally inclined to express disappointment or concern through indirect speech, in an effort to preserve social harmony with their interlocutors.

The character Shofi in the novel Zinah is deliberately constructed as the antithesis of the traditional female archetype—she does not merely uphold social relationships through politeness or indirect communication, but instead actively asserts her opinions and defends her autonomy through direct and confrontational speech. Through this characterization, Shofi not only rejects conventional feminine linguistic norms but also demonstrates how language can serve as a tool of resistance against oppressive social structures. This phenomenon reinforces Butler's theory of gender performativity [26], which posits that gender identity is not fixed, but is constructed and negotiated through repeated linguistic acts within specific social frameworks. Thus, through her masculine speech style, Shofi represents a woman who articulates her identity actively and challenges the conventional gender order.

In the context of translation, the shift in interrogative forms in the Indonesian rendition weakens the gender characterization that is strongly constructed in the original text. Shofi, who in the Arabic version is portrayed as a woman with a confrontational, confident speech style that challenges male authority, appears in the target language as more moderate, neutral, and even lacking the gendered tension that is essential to her portrayal. This is due to the inappropriate choice of translation strategies—specifically, the use of modulation and reduction techniques without adequate consideration of the pragmatic function and ideological value embedded in the interrogative forms of the source language.

4.1.2. Short Answer

Answer questions directly, without beating around the bush.

Based on the data that has been studied, women use this feature as many as 5 ka li or equivalent to 5.43%. Here is an example of its use:

Example:

Source Language (BSu): "حاضر يا بابا." [24]

Target Language (BSa): "Paham, ayah." [25]

Translation: "Understood, Father"

It was spoken by Mageeda in response to her father's

angry command when she entered his room.

The word ḥāḍir lexically means 'present/now/yes' etc [27]. Contextually, it can be used to replace the word 'understand' as in the example above.

In the utterance above, Mageeda uses a feature of masculine language, namely a short answer. As highlighted in various sociolinguistic studies [4,18], men tend to use language for transactional purposes rather than relational ones. In other words, men use speech to convey information concisely and optimize efficiency, rather than building or strengthening social relationships, which is more commonly done by women. What makes this significant is not merely the structure of the response, but the gendered power dynamics embedded in the exchange. Mageeda's use of a terse, compliant answer to her father's command—despite the tension implied by his anger—signals a strategic linguistic negotiation. Rather than engaging emotionally or defensively, she responds in a conventionally masculine way: brief, precise, obedient.

From a translational perspective, the rendering of "حاضر يا بابا" into *"Paham, Ayah"* in the Indonesian version reflects a faithful transfer of both the **lexical meaning** and the **pragmatic function** of the original utterance. The translator employed the technique of **established equivalence**, choosing a culturally and contextually appropriate expression in the target language that preserves the succinctness, tone, and relational dynamics of the source text.

4.1.3. Command and Directive

Giving orders firmly and having a strong tone of authority is one of the characteristics of men in speaking. Directive is a language style used when someone wants others to do something as instructed. Female characters use it 9 times or equivalent to 9.78%. Here is an example:

Example:

Source Language: "نامي يا بنتي،" [24]

Target Language: "Tidurlah, anakku." [25]

Translation: "Go to sleep, my child"

The text was spoken by Mageeda's aunt.

In this speech, Aunt Mageeda uses imperative sentences to order Mageda to sleep. The command spoken by Aunt Mageeda is very polite, this is evidenced by the use of the word 'يا بنتي' which means 'O my daughter', the use of these words reflects politeness in commanding and does not show coercion.

Commands and directives are often considered part of masculine language because, according to sociolinguistic studies such as Coates [4] and Holmes [17], men tend to use language to assert authority, control situations, and affirm dominance in conversation. Giving direct commands is a way to demonstrate power in social interactions and dominate the course of conversation. All these features align with the traditional construction of masculinity in society.

In contrast, women in many cultures are more likely to use suggestive, collaborative, and indirect forms of language to maintain social relationships.

Commands and directives are often classified as features of male speech, as sociolinguistic studies such as those by Coates [4] and Holmes [17] have shown that men tend to use language to assert authority, control interactions, and establish dominance in conversation. Issuing direct commands serves as a way to demonstrate power in social interactions and to dominate the flow of discourse. These features align closely with traditional constructions of masculinity in many societies. In contrast, women across various cultures are more likely to employ suggestive, collaborative, and indirect forms of language in order to maintain social harmony.

From a translation perspective, the rendering of "نامي يا بنتي" into Indonesian as *"Tidurlah, anakku"* does not exhibit any significant shift. The translator successfully retains the literal meaning, emotional undertone, and structural integrity of the original utterance. The translation strategy employed is that of **established equivalence**, whereby a conventional and culturally appropriate expression in the target language is selected to accurately convey both the semantic content and the interpersonal tone of the source text.

4.1.4. Question

Jennifer Coates, in her work, Women, Men and Language [4] describes some differences in the way women and men ask questions. Women tend to use questions to encourage conversation, show interest, or establish a connection with the other person. These questions are often collaborative, inviting others to share their experiences or views. Women tend to ask more questions in their conversations to maintain communication, either in the form of

asking for opinions, or actively engaging others in their communication.

As for men, they are more likely to use questions to get information or demonstrate their status or knowledge. Questions from men are often more direct and may be less aimed at building interpersonal relationships. Men tend to ask fewer questions in everyday conversation, especially if they feel they already know enough about the topic. Men usually ask closed-ended (yes/no) or challenging questions, which can be used to steer the conversation or test the other person's knowledge.

Based on the analysis conducted, the questioning feature was used 14 times by the female characters in the novel *Zinah*. Of this total, 6 of them (43%) are real questions that require the interlocutor to provide information or answers, while the other 8 data (57%) are questions that build interpersonal relationships, sometimes to strengthen the speaker's argumentation, sometimes to provide a response to information obtained from the interlocutor.

Example 1:

Language Source: "مال لونك مخطوف كده يا ست بدور؟" [24]

Target Language: "Mengapa kau pucat begini, Nona?" [25]

Translation: "Why are you so pale, Miss?"

The question was spoken by a maid to her employer. The question is really intended to seek information, not just to make small talk. The question in this context reflects the maid's concern about her employer's condition. Therefore, the utterance functions not only as a request for information, but also carries a relational function—expressing care and emotional involvement. In this case, the question is not merely a conversation opener or small talk, but an expression of genuine curiosity grounded in empathy.

The Indonesian translation, "Mengapa kau pucat begini, Nona?" ("Why are you so pale, Miss?"), successfully retains the primary informational function. However, the interpersonal dimension of the question—as marked in Arabic by the vocative يا ست بدور and the colloquial expression كده—undergoes a degree of neutralization. The emotional and cultural nuances present in the source language are somewhat diminished in the target language, which renders the utterance in a more formal and less intimate tone. This subtle shift illustrates a common challenge in translation: while the semantic content may be preserved, the relational nuances and stylistic features embedded in the source language are not always fully transferable into the target language.

Example 2:

Source language: "هل المأذون ضروري؟" [24]

Target language: "Apakah peresmian penting?" [25]

Translation: "Is the inauguration important?"

The question is asked by the main character in the novel, Bodour, to her husband.

This question is not asked to seek information. On the contrary, it carries an expressive and confrontational function—an implicit rejection of the husband's idea regarding the importance of formal marriage institutions and their official symbols. Bodour, as the main female character in Zinah, is not questioning a fact, but rather rhetorically challenging the logic and traditional values represented by her partner. Thus, the question serves as a subtle yet sharp form of verbal resistance against male authority and the patriarchal system.

In the Indonesian translation, this line is rendered as "Apakah peresmian penting?" ("Is the formalization important?"), which may appear semantically equivalent but reflects a shift in meaning and an ideological reduction. The word "peresmian" is a more general and neutral term compared to المأذون, and it does not directly refer to a religious figure or the formal institution of marriage. As a result, the symbolic power embedded in the word المأذون—as a representation of the social and religious system—is not fully conveyed to the target language readers. This occurs because the translation technique used is modulation.

4.1.5. Aggressive

In this novel, male language features were identified not only as outlined in existing theories, but additional features typically associated with male speakers were also found. One such feature is aggressive language. There is a significant difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness. Assertive individuals confidently express their ideas and opinions while still respecting the views, needs, and desires of others. They do not prioritize others' wants over their own, but communicate in a balanced and respectful manner.

Aggressive individuals, by contrast, tend to dismiss others' opinions, issue threats, and verbally attack, often

appearing confntational. This behavior typically involves a disregard for the feelings and rights of others. Assertive behavior involves self-control in achieving personal goals without violating others' boundaries [28]. Aggressive language in the novel *Zinah* is expressed by female characters in 9 utterances, accounting for 9.78% of the total. The following is an example:

Source language: "إنت اللي قليل الأدب" [24].

Target Language: "Kau yang kurang ajar" [25].

The example above illustrates the use of harsh language by a female character (Shofi) directed at her husband. In the context of patriarchal Arab culture, women are generally not expected to speak in such a manner, as the husband is traditionally regarded as a figure of authority who must be obeyed and treated with deference. In this context, the author, Nawal el-Sa'dawi—a renowned feminist activist—aims to challenge prevailing norms by asserting that in certain situations, such as when a husband subjects his wife to unjust treatment, a woman has the right to speak out.

In the context of translation, the utterance "إنت اللي قليل الأدب" rendered as "Kau yang kurang ajar" may appear lexically equivalent—both expressions convey an insult that implies rudeness or inappropriate behavior. However, there is a significant difference in meaning and impact between this utterance in Arab culture and in Indonesian culture. In the patriarchal Arab society, the phrase "قليل الأدب" is not merely interpreted as a casual insult; it carries a heavy social and ideological burden, unlike its usage in the Indonesian context. Therefore, although there is no shift in structure or literal meaning, the cultural value and ideological weight of the utterance are diminished in translation.

4.2. Translation Techniques

Translation techniques serve as a micro-level analytical tool essential for identifying errors that lead to shifts from the source text. By examining the specific techniques employed, it is possible to pinpoint where meaning, style, or nuance has been altered in the process of rendering the source text into the target language. The following **Table 3** presents the translation techniques applied to the speech of female characters in the novel Zinah:

The data reveal that, out of a total of 240 translation techniques analyzed, the most dominant was established equivalence, which occurred 146 times, accounting for 61% of all techniques. This indicates that the majority of translations in the corpus aim to preserve semantic equivalence between the source and target texts. The next most frequently occurring techniques were implicitation (8%) and pure borrowing (8%). Implicitation reflects the translator's tendency to render meanings more implicitly in the target text, while pure borrowing suggests the use of foreign terms without modification.

Table 3. Translation Techniques.

Translation Techniques	N	Persentage (%)
Establish Equivalent	146	61
Eksplisitation	15	6
Impisitation	20	8
Pure Borrowing	18	8
Variation	7	3
Modulation	12	5
Literal	7	3
Paraphrase	4	2
Reduction	2	1
Generalization	3	1
Discursive Creation	5	2
Transposition	1	0
Particularization	0	0
Adaption	1	0%
Total	240	100%

Other techniques such as explicitation (6%) and modulation (5%) also appeared with moderate frequency. Explicitation makes implicit information in the source text more explicit in the target text, whereas modulation involves a shift in perspective or conceptual category during translation. Meanwhile, techniques such as variation and literal translation each accounted for only 3% of the total, indicating that translators rarely resorted to purely literal renderings or structural/formal variations.

Less frequently used techniques included paraphrase (2%), discursive creation (2%), reduction (1%), generalization (1%), as well as transposition, adaptation, and particularization, each of which accounted for 0% of the total. This article focuses solely on translation techniques that led to significant shifts in the rendering of the female characters' speech. Based on the findings, the techniques that contributed to such shifts include discursive cre-

ation, reduction, transposition, modulation, and literal translation.

5. Discussion

5.1. Masculine Speech in Female Voices

This study confirms that the female character in the novel *Zinah* predominantly employs masculine linguistic features rather than feminine ones, accounting for 51 out of the 92 analyzed instances, or 55.43%. This finding indicates that Nawal el-Sa'dawi, as a prominent Egyptian feminist, deliberately reconstructs the representation of women through linguistic strategies that challenge conventional gender norms. In the context of Arab culture, which is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures, the disparity between men and women is particularly pronounced. Men generally hold social authority and exert control over various aspects of life, while women are often relegated to subordinate positions. Actions considered acceptable or normative for men are frequently restricted—or even prohibited—when performed by women. This reflects a social construction that is heavily imbued with gender bias [29].

The findings of this study clearly point to the presence of female characters created to represent resistance against established gender norms. Through the use of masculine linguistic features, these characters not only exhibit linguistic deviation but also assert themselves as active subjects in negotiating power and identity within a patriarchal social structure. This strategy reflects the author's deliberate effort to deconstruct traditional representations of women and to present female figures who are bold, vocal, and non-submissive to male-dominated systems. This depiction stands in stark contrast to the prevailing social norms in many Arab countries, where women are still positioned within frameworks of subordination and dependency on men. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, for instance, women are treated as legally non-autonomous subjects, dependent on male guardians in various aspects of life—from mobility to decision-making. This situation is the result of a fusion between deeply rooted patriarchal traditions and conservative religious interpretations. Female rights activists often face pressure and intimidation when challenging these systems [30]. Therefore, the dominant female characters in *Zinah*, who employ masculine speech patterns, represent a radical attempt to challenge the weakened portrayals of women commonly found in dominant social norms across the Arab world.

The use of linguistic patterns traditionally associated with male speech—such as assertiveness and aggressiveness—as revealed in this study, indicates an ideological effort to present empowered female voices that resist patriarchal structures. This finding also challenges the views of prominent linguists such as Coates [4]; Holmes [17], dan Tannen [18], who argue that women tend to use a speech style that emphasizes social bonding and solidarity. Accordingly, women are generally seen as more polite, indirect in giving commands, and inclined to avoid taboo words and swearing. However, this study found that certain female characters engage in verbal confrontations—even with their husbands—demonstrating a striking deviation from conventional female speech norms, as illustrated in several utterances classified under the aggressive language category.

Every speaker adjusts their way of speaking depending on the interlocutor, and more importantly, on the situational context [31]. In the novel *Zinah*, female characters adopt masculine linguistic features when interacting with male characters in order to assert power, maintain their position, and negotiate their identity within unequal gender relations. These findings also reflect the idea that language is not merely a tool for communication, but a medium of social representation capable of renegotiating gender positions within society. In this context, El Saadawi appears to use her female characters as a symbolic form of resistance against masculine dominance, both socially and linguistically. Thus, the deviation from typically feminine linguistic patterns—often characterized as more cooperative and supportive—is not simply a linguistic anomaly, but rather a deliberate narrative strategy to construct female identities that are autonomous, critical, and resistant.

In this respect, the present study differs from previous works in the field of language and gender—such as those by Lie [32], Mirawati et al. [33], and Nuringtyas & Navila [34]—which have not yet explored the connection between linguistic features and the socio-cultural conditions of the society being portrayed, nor have they examined the author's role as the creator of the novel's social

and cultural context.

5.2. Masculinity Shifts in Translation

In the context of this study, the term "shift" refers to instances where elements representing a masculine linguistic style in the source text—such as assertive, harsh, confrontational, or dominant diction—undergo a reduction in intensity or are omitted altogether in the process of translation into the target language. As a result, the translated text exhibits a less masculine tone compared to the original, either due to a softening of emotional intensity, the use of more neutral vocabulary, or the absence of expressive forms that are culturally associated with masculinity in the source language. This shift has significant implications for the ideological representation and identity construction within the translated text.

Shifts in translation can also serve as a benchmark for analyzing cultural and genre differences across languages, as well as reflecting the translator's ideology in conveying the intended meaning of the source text [35]. In the context of literary translation, such shifts may indicate a change in the representation of female characters—from strong and active figures in the source text to more passive or neutral roles in the target version. Therefore, it is essential to critically examine how translation strategies contribute to either the reinforcement or alteration of gender representation in the translated text.

Out of the 51 data points analyzed, 13 instances of translation shifts were identified as resulting from the misapplication of translation techniques.

Example 1:

Source Language:

"حاولي تنصحيها يا مجيدة عشان تعرف ربنا." [24].

Target Language :

"Seharusnya kau menasihatinya untuk mengenal Tuhan, Mageeda" [25].

Translation: "You should advise her to get to know God, Mageeda."

In the Arabic text, the author uses the imperative verb "حاولي" (try), which indicates a command or suggestion in the present tense. However, in the translation, using "Seharusnya" (You should) changes the meaning to imply a more suggestive or mandatory tone, and is not as urgent as the original.

A better translation would be: "Try to advise her, Mageeda, to get to know God."

In the example above, the shift occurs due to the improper application of the modulation technique, specifically the replacement of a direct command with an indirect suggestion. This case becomes particularly significant within the context of gender discourse in the novel, as imperative and directive speech forms are often associated with characteristics of masculine language—marked by assertiveness, control, and decisiveness. The shift from command to suggestion not only affects the interpersonal dynamics between characters but may also contribute to the ideological weakening of the female character's assertive stance in the translation. This reflects a broader pattern in which the translated version tends to neutralize or soften elements of resistance, authority, or emotional urgency expressed by female characters in the source text.

Example 2:

Source Language: "كل الرجالة ورق، كلهم مرضى، كذابين منافقين مزدوجين"[24]

Target Language: "Semua laki-laki adalah kertas. Mereka semua sakit, pembohong dan munafik" [25]

Translation: "All men are paper. They are all sick, liars, and munafik"

In this example, the phrase "كذابين منافقين مزدوجين" ("liars, hypocrites, and duplicitous") has been semantically reduced in the target language. The term "مزدوجين" (duplicitous or double-faced), which reinforces the accusatory tone and exposes the perceived moral duplicity of men in the original, has been omitted in the translation. This omission dilutes the emotional and ideological weight of the utterance.

The original Arabic sentence is charged with anger and defiance, reflecting not only personal disillusionment but also a broader critique of patriarchal values. The repetition and accumulation of negative attributes create a confrontational tone, serving as a powerful linguistic tool to express the speaker's deep-seated frustration. However, the Indonesian translation weakens this intensity by simplifying the list of attributes and softening the tone, which risks diminishing the force of the character's emotional and ideological expression.

Such reduction is not an isolated case. It is indicative

of a recurring translational tendency throughout the novel, in which strong emotional expressions—particularly those involving anger, protest, or social criticism—are toned down or made more palatable for the target audience. This pattern reflects a form of ideological filtering, where potentially provocative or culturally sensitive content is moderated.

This is especially problematic given that one of the defining features of masculine language, as identified in this study, is its aggressive style—a mode of expression that exceeds mere assertiveness and embodies dominance, resistance, and challenge. The omission of such stylistic markers in the translation not only affects the interpersonal dynamics among characters but also erases important gendered nuances embedded in the original text.

Example 3:

Source language:

كله كلام فارغ منقول عن الكتب في الغرب، الفن عندنا خلاعا ومجون، [24]

Target Language: Semuanya adalah omong kosong yang dipindah dari Barat dengan buku. Seni bagi kita adalah kegilaan dan lawakan [25].

Translation:"It's all nonsense copied from Western books. Art, for us, is madness and jokes."

The phrase "كله كلام فارغ منقول عن الكتب في الغرب" asserts that ideas or theories—likely within the context of art or culture—are deemed nonsense or meaningless because they are merely imitations of Western thought. This represents a form of rejection of Western intellectual hegemony, accusing Arab society or intellectual circles of being passive imitators. The speaker then continues their harsh critique of art by referring to "خلاعا ومجون," which the translator renders as "madness and jokes." However, the term 'خلاعة' in this context refers to a taboo word that means "lewd/obscene" or something akin to "pornographic". This is a severe critique of art forms considered to have lost moral or spiritual value, instead glorifying sexual freedom, vulgar entertainment, or deviant norms. In works with a resistive or feminist nature, such as the novel Zinah, the presence of coarse, sharp, or impolite language actually reflects social tension. The translator should not morally filter this but rather embrace presenting "uncomfortable" language. In the example above, a shift occurs due to the misapplication of the modulation technique, specifically the replacement of direct commands with indirect ones, even though command and directive forms are one of the features of masculine language.

These findings suggest that translation should not be understood merely as a process of linguistic transfer, but rather as an interpretative practice that actively contributes to the construction of gender representation within texts. In this regard, the translator's role extends beyond ensuring linguistic fidelity to include an awareness of the social and cultural implications of each translational choice [36]. Translation, therefore, can serve either as a vehicle for reintroducing marginalized voices or—if approached uncritically—as a mechanism that reinforces existing ideological dominance. By positioning the translator as an ideological agent, this study underscores the importance of considering the socio-cultural context in literary translation. This perspective opens new avenues for further exploration of the translator's role in shaping meaning and discourse, particularly in relation to issues of gender and power.

6. Conclusions

The novel Zinah portrays a female character who uses features of masculine language, symbolizing strength. The use of these linguistic forms not only reflects a shift in the character's gender identity but also serves as a strategy to negotiate her social position and challenge patriarchal dominance in society. Through a direct, assertive, and authoritative speech style—traits traditionally associated with masculine language—the female character in Zinah challenges linguistic norms that have historically restricted women's roles in both public and private spheres.

This study has limitations as the data used is sourced from a novel, which allows for subjective intervention by the author in shaping characters and language use. Therefore, the representation of a female character employing masculine language features does not fully reflect the reality of language practices in Arab society. Future research is suggested to utilize empirical data from real-life language interactions to provide a more authentic and accurate depiction of the relationship between language, gender, and power.

Additionally, from a translation perspective, translators often reduce expressions of anger, sharp criticism, and other forms of confrontational language in order to

soften the translated text. However, such strategies can obscure the ideological intent of the original author and erase the emotional nuances that are part of the female character's identity construction in the source text. Therefore, literature is not merely a linguistic process but also an ideological practice. The success of translation is not only measured by the fluency and readability of the target text but also by its ability to preserve the meaning and ideological nuances embedded in the source text.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, T.F.; methodology, T.F. and R.S.; validation, T.F., M.N., R.S., and M.Y.A.; formal analysis, T.F.; data curation, T.F. and M.Y.A.; writing—original draft preparation, T.F.; writing—review and editing, T.F., M.N., R.S., and M.Y.A.; supervision, M.N., R.S., and M.Y.A. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript to be published.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Acknowledgments

We sincerely appreciate the contributions of all team members whose support and efforts were essential to the completion of this study. We also thank our colleagues and all those who provided support during the development of this work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Bigler, R.S., Leaper, C., 2015. Gendered Language. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences. 2(1), 187–194.

[2] Vainapel, S., Shamir, O.Y., Tenenbaum, Y., et al., 2015. The dark side of gendered language: The masculine-generic form as a cause for self-report bias. Psychological Assessment. 27(4), 1513–1519.

[3] Latic, E., Celjo, A.B., 2018. An exploration of beliefs about gender differences in language use. Journal of Language and Education. 4(3), 48–57. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17323/2411-7390-2018-4-3-48-57

[4] Coates, J., 2015. Women, Man and Language. Routledge: New York, NY, USA. pp. 6.

[5] Alhammadi, W., Rabab'Ah, G., Alghazo, S., 2024. Gender Differences in Language Use in Talks at Google. Kemanusiaan. 31(1), 149–176. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21315/kajh2024.31.1.8

[6] Lakoff, R.T., 2004. Language and Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries: Text and Commentaries. Harper & Row: New York, NY, USA. pp. 309.

[7] Mohajer, L., Jan, J.M., 2002. Does Men's Support Come on Time?: An Analysis of Minimal Responses in Men's Talk. Language, Linguistics, Literature. 28(1), 16–27. DOI: http://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2022-2801-02

[8] Thomson, R., Murachver, T., Green, J., 2001. Where is the gender in gendered language? Psychological Science. 12(2), 171–175. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00329

[9] Zamfir, C.M., 2022. Insights into Language Diversity in Business Communication. British and American Studies. 28, 309–318. DOI: https://doi.org/10.35923/BAS.28.31

[10] Shaw, S.H., 2023. Activism, Advocacy, and Rebellion: Arab Women Through the Work of Nawal El Saadawi. In: Mayer, C.-H., Vanderheiden, E., Braun-Lewensohn, O., Chen, G., Sueda, K., Mangolothi, B., Safdar, S., Kim, S. (eds.).Women's Empowerment for a Sustainable Future. Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland. pp. 753–766.

[11] Shaw, S.H., Silverio, S.A., 2021. Transcending Shame Through Rebellion: The Modern Arab Woman, Sexual Suppression, and the Will to Break Free. In: Mayer, C.-H., Vanderheiden, E., Wong, P. (eds.). Shame 40. Springer International Publishing: Cham,

Switzerland. pp. 475–494.

[12] Alamrani, G., 2021. Modern Arab Women and Traditional Morality. Humanities and Management Sciences - Scientific Journal of King Faisal University.22(2), 1–7. DOI: https://doi.org/10.37575/h/art/0091

[13] Grami, A., 2022. Freedom of speech in contemporary Arab societies from a gender perspective. Philosophy & Social Criticism. 48(4), 580–589.

[14] Hamid, M.A., Basid, A., Aulia, I.N., 2021. The reconstruction of Arab women role in media: a critical discourse analysis. Social Network Analysis and Mining. 11(1), 101. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-021-00809-0

[15] Molina, L., Albir, A.H., 2002. Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach. Meta: Journal des traducteurs. 47(4), 498. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/008033ar

[16] Zhu, L., 2019. Woman language: Features and historic change. Journal of Language Teaching and Research. 10(1), 161–171.

[17] Holmes, J., 2013. An Introduction to Sosiolinguistics, 4th ed. Routledge: New York, NY, USA. pp. 301–330.

[18] Tannen, D., 2013. You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation. Harper Collins: New York, NY, USA. pp. 110–113.

[19] McConnell-Ginet, S., 2011. Gender, Sexuality, and Meaning: Linguistic Practice and Politics. Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA. pp. 107–124.

[20] Molina, L., Albir, A., 2022. Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach. Meta: Journal des traducteurs. 47(4), 498. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/008033ar

[21] Santosa, R., 2021. Dasar-Dasar Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Kebahasaan. UNS Press: Surakarta, Indonesia. pp. 27-60 page range.

[22] Nababan, M., Nuraeni, A., Sumardiono, 2012. Pengembangan Model Penilaian Kualitas Terjemahan. Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra. 24(1), 39–57.

[23] Holmes, J., Meyerhoff, M., 2003. Different Voices, Different Views: An Introduction to Current Research in Language and Gender. In: Holmes, J., Meyerhoff, M. (eds.). The Handbook of Language and Gender. Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd: Hoboken, NJ, USA. pp. 1–17.

[24] Sa'dawi, N.E., 2010. Zinah. Dar as-Safi: Beirut, Lebanon. pp. 36–285.

[25] Sa'dawi, N.E., 2014. Zeina (translated version). Mitra Pustaka: Yogyakarta, Indonesia. pp. 28–345.

[26] Butler, J., 1999. Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity. 10 anniversary ed. Routledge: New York, NY, USA. pp. 221.

[27] Munawwir, A.W., 1997. Kamus Al-Munawwir Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap. 2nd ed. Pustaka Progressif: Surabaya, Indonesia. pp. 272–273.

[28] Murphi, J., 2011. Assertiveness: How to Stand Up for Yourself and Still Win the Respect of Others. Available from: https://pdfroom.com/books/assertiveness-how-to-stand-up-for-yourself-and-still-win-the-respect-of-thers/DkgVeWX9d9B (cited 17 May 2025)

[29] Ibrahim, C., Dwairy, M., 2016. Identification of Arab Men and Women with Oppressive Patriarchal Practices. Arab Journal of Psychiatry. 27(2), 105–116. DOI: https://doi.org/10.12816/0029090

[30] Andersson, E., Togelius, L., 2011. Women oppressed in the name of culture and religion, Saudi Arabia and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Available from: https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:mau:diva-23219 (cited 16 May 2025)

[31] Anis MY, Nababan M, Santosa R, Masrukhi M. 2022. The thematic system in the construction of Arabic Sufism communities and Islamic identity. HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies. 78(1), 6.

[32] Lie, E.S., 2022. Women's Language Features of an Ancient Chinese Female Warrior Disguised as a Male in "Mulan." ULIL ALBAB: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin. 1(10), 3743–3750.

[33] Mirawati, M., Arifin, M.B., Lubis, I.S., 2022. Women's Language Features of Debbie In Oceans 8 Movie (2018). Ilmu Budaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni dan Budaya. 6(4), 1569–1580.

[34] Nuringtyas, S., Navila, A., 2022. Women's Language Features on Utterances of Charlie's Angels Movie. Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora. 23(1), 12–20.

[35] Anis, M. Y. 2023. Arabization or Domestication? Case Study of Information Structure Shift in Aphorisms. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 13(5), 1270–1281. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1305.22

[36] Simon, S., 2005. Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission. Available from: https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/fol.5.2.12thw (cited 17 May 2025)