AHJ Arab Humanities Journal

Middle East Institution of scientific Publishing

A Socio-pragmatic Study of Cyber Bullying in Oprah's – Harry & Meghan 2020 Interview's Commenters

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Published on: 21 Nov. 2021

Abstract

This paper deals with Cyber bullying socio-pragmatically. It depends on the pragmatic strategies such as (speech act theory) and how these strategies influenced by gender (as social variable). It depends on British commenters as a reaction to the interview of Oprah with Harry and Meghan after they left the life of the castle and be as an ordinary people because of arguments about the color of the skin of their baby. Cyber bullying generally includes three components (bully, victim and bystander), this study deals with the language of cyber bullying, especially the pragmatic strategies of language that is used by the bullies, victims whether the victim is (Harry, Meghan

of both of them) and bystanders in cyber bullying activities that occurred in popular social media platforms in British, namely Facebook, the comment are from Sky News and BBC.

Keywords*: socio-pragmatics, cyber bully, speech act, gender*

* Introduction

In human life, language is a tool that must be owned by human-being to communicate with one another. The language product of communications has several forms, such as for requesting something, giving information, entertaining, and others. By language, people are able to socialize and to communicate one another for whatever they do. It is through conversation in which people can convey their messages so that interaction and communication can be created. The influence of the social variables on the perception and production of language is the main area of a relatively recent field of study called *sociopragmatics*. Socio-pragmatics is concerned with how social variables affect the use of language according to Leech (1983: 11).

According to (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Schwartz, 2009) bullying is a form of interpersonal violence that can cause short- long-term physical, emotional, and social problems among victims, and is, therefore, a serious public health. It also can mean behavior involves laughing at someone or something in an unkind way.

The study is concerned with how social variable (like gender) influences the use of cyber bulling expressions used by commenters. This paper tries to answer the following questions:-

1- To what extent does gender influences the use of cyber bulling?

2- Do men and women use different cyber bulling expressions?

* Theoretical Background

1- Socio-pragmatics and Cyber Bulling

The mutual influence between any language and the society in which it is used is axiomatic and self-evident. Each one of these phenomena is absorbed in the other and, consequently, they greatly influence each other (Howell and Paris, 2011: 51). It is this influence that makes it

easy for almost everyone to identify a speaker as belonging to a certain society or region. The choice of vocabulary items, sentence patterns, the accent of the speaker, etc. all reveal different facts about the speaker's age, gender, social class, education, among many other things. These social variables are engraved in the language a speaker uses to the extent that it is impossible to isolate them from it.

In addition to what is mentioned above, the various social variables that frame any situation determine the level of directness and the choice of the linguistic expressions. The influence of the social variables on the perception and production of language is the main area of a relatively recent field of study called *sociopragmatics*. Socio-pragmatics is concerned with how social variables affect the use of language according to Leech (1983: 11).

Therefore, in using whatever language, whether native or not, one must pay more attention to the social rules of speaking that are essential to achieve appropriate communication. Being of such an importance, these rules must be observed to avoid a communication breakdown (failure)

that is caused by their non-observance. Language is used to perform different purposes in any community, so it is used for apologizing; praising, mocking, and criticizing etc.

According to (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Schwartz, 2009) bullying is a form of interpersonal violence that can cause short- long-term physical, emotional, and social problems among victims, and is, therefore, a serious public health. It also can mean behavior involves laughing at someone or something in an unkind way. Cyber bullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyber bullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyber bullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyber bullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior. (Web souece1)

The most common places where cyber bullying occurs are:-

1- social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok

2- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices

3- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet

4- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards, such as Reddit

5- Email

6- Online gaming communities

2- Speech Act Theory

A speech act in linguistics is defined as an utterance that has performative function in language and communication. According to Kent Bach, "almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention: there is the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising, and how one is trying to affect one's audience." The contemporary use of the term goes back to J. L. Austin's (1962) development of performative utterances and his theory of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Speech acts are commonly taken to include such acts as promising, ordering, greeting, warning, inviting and congratulating. (Virbel, 2015:53). Speech acts can be analysed on three levels: 1-A locutionary act, the performance of an utterance: the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning, comprising phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts corresponding to the verbal, syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance. 2-An illocutionary act: the pragmatic 'illocutionary force' of the utterance, thus its intended significance as a socially valid verbal action. 3-An perlocutionary act: its actual effect, such as persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring, or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not. (Finch,2002:1).

3- Sociolinguistics and Gender

Holmes (1992:1) stated that sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. Language in one society is different from that in another society. People have their own language variation. Languages provide a variety of how to say something, to address, to

greet others, to describe things, and to pay compliments.

Gender has been used in place of the word *sex*. *Sex* may refer to physiological, functional, or psychological descriptions of persons who are characterized as male or female (Pearson, 1985:9). It (gender) is traditionally defined as a set of two or more categories such as feminine, masculine, or neuter, categories into which words are divided on the basis of psychological associations, vivacity, or other characteristics (Pearson, 1985:11). Gender (socially constructed) is a concept that is much more complex than *sex* (biological). There is nothing a person does to acquire her or his sex. It is a classification that society makes based on genetic and biological factors, and, for most people, it endures throughout their lives. Gender, however, is neither innate nor necessarily stable and it is defined by society, expressed by individuals as they interact with others and media in their society (Wood, 2009:23).

Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003:11) stated that gender is treated as the accomplishment and product of social interaction. The focus is on the way individuals do or perform their gender identity in interaction with others, and there is an emphasis on the dynamic aspects of interaction. Gender emerges over time in interaction with others. Language is a resource which can be drawn on creatively to perform different aspects of one's social identity at different points in an interaction. The daily routine reveals that language is defined as a set of rules used by its speakers as the means of their communicative interaction. Siahaan (2008:161) stated that women had another language, which is different from the men. Language simply reflects social facts. For example, when ethnic groups use a distinct language associated with their ethnic identity, where a choice of language is available for communication, it is often possible for an individual to signal their ethnicity by the language they choose to use. Another way that language affects society is in sexist language. The language affects the way people view men and women because it treats men and women differently.

Gender is different from other forms of social difference in that men

and women interact extensively within families and households and in other role relations. Cultural messages provide scripts for how men and women should interact with each other, and gender influences the relationship. This contact makes a rewarding relationship with someone of the "opposite sex". Social relationship with opposite sex is called as *cross-gender* interaction (Baumgarte via Felmle, Sweet and Sinclair, 2012:3)

* Methodology

1- Data Collection

The data is chosen from the comments of the interview of Oprah with Harry and Meghan. These comments are taken from the Sky News and BBC. The theme of the interview is about the prince Harry and Meghan departure of the British Castle and leaving the queen alone and traveling to Canada to live as normal people without secretary, without money. Many of British make cyber bullying about their behavior and by many ways. British people don't encourage them to leave the castle.

2- Data Analysis
Text 1
Ken Remley

Meghan is the only dutchess that turned a Prince into a Toad man

In this comment, the victim is Harry. The implied meaning is that Meghan is not British and Harry is not gentle. Cyber bullying is achieved by using the words "Dutchess" and "Toad". The commenter uses speech act of criticizing to criticize Meghan nationality as being not British. Also, he assimilates Harry with Toad thus. The commenter criticizes Harry for his weak personality because he is the only one who leaves his family and position as a prince and follows his wife who is not princess or British.

Text 2
Edward Davis

Prince Harry and the Court Jester! man

The prince Harry is victimized by the commenter since he puts him with the court jester in two equal scales. He criticizes him because he puts himself in such critical situation and waiting for jester to judge him while he was in a position to judge others. Cyber bullying is achieved

when the Prince Harry is judged by Jester.

Text 3

Tracy Casey

let me get this right, they left England because of racism but chose to come to a Country that is systemically racist?

woman

The commenter here makes cyber bullying through criticizing the country that the pairs are chosen which is Canada that is full of racism, so how they are leaving England while they want to run away from racism because of the dark skin of their new baby.

Text 4

John Licciardello

For a pair that wanted to be away from the media and hype, they certainly seem to always be in it with a smile and a wave

man

The victims here are the pair themselves (Harry, Meghan). The commenter asserts that the pair must be ashamed and embarrassed of what they have done and be away from media, but they always appear on media and public spreading their story with smiles and waves. The cyber bullying is appeared through the commenter's criticism of their shows.

Text 5

Rukie Farr

No surprises there. Two losers looking for 🏅🏅🏅and fame

man

The victims here are Harry and Meghan, the commenter calls them losers and he asserts that they are losers and needy because they left their family and go away, they have no right to use bank accounts any more. Cyber bully is achieved by the commenter use of the sign of money to indicate that they are running behind money.

Text 6

Cindy Moore Cole

Who cares about these selfish people?

woman

The victim here are Harry and Meghan, the commenter asserts that they are selfish because they run behind their benefit and they left the castle while the family are in hard times and his grandfather is in the hospital now. Cyber bully is done by the commenter use of the word " selfish".

Text 7

Uli Lacks

Nope, don't want to watch MM "playing" the victim role.

She's not that good actress she thinks she is #suitcasegirl

man

The victim is Meghan, the commenter mentions Meghan as "suitcasegirl" because she is not a good actress to act the victim role, and also, she is not from high class or Nobel people to carry the suitcase. The commenter criticizes Meghan as being not good actress and she is not able to play the role of the victim.

Text 8

Theresa Webb

The Prince and The Showgirl would be a more appropriate film!!

woman

The victims in this comment are the prince and his wife, the commenter criticizes their act and calls Harry as "The Prince" to underestimate him and Meghan as showgirl because she is a good actress and she acts so well during the interview. Both of them act well and they can do a marvelous film. The cyber bullying is achieved through "The Prince" and "The Showgirl" even through "more appropriate film".

Text 9

Gary Tulip

Fed up to the back teeth hearing about this pair. They are an embarrassment to the British nation.

man

The victims are Harry and Meghan and the commenter doesn't mention their names and calls them this pair. Cyber bullying is done by considering this pair as embarrassment to the British culture because they break the British traditions. Also they do not deserve such attention. The commenter criticizes them and asserts that they are shame to the British society.

Text 10

Diane Ward-Cairns

Better things to do with my life than watching that money grabbing pair

woman

The victims are Harry and Meghan. Cyber bullying is made by money grabbing pair. The commenter asserts that there are many valuable things to do or watch than watching this pair that are looking for money and making shows here and there. The commenter has not enough time to watch them or know their news.

* Result and Discussion

Table (1) the Victim of Cyber Bullying through the Gender

Number of comments	Gender	Victim 1 Harry	Victim2 Meghan	Victim3 The pair	Victim4 Country
1	man	1			
2	woman	1			
3	woman				1
4	man			1	
5	man			1	
6	woman			1	
7	man		1		
8	woman			1	
9	man			1	
10	woman			1	
Total Percentage		20%	10%	60%	10%

Cyber bullying is done by male and female directly and equally by mentioning the victim. Men are more direct than women when they do cyber bulling for example the words " toad" and "suitcasegirl". Three men and three women bully Prince Harry and Meghan both (60%). Some of the commenters bully Harry alone or Meghan alone or even the country that they are chosen. British people are against racism and they regard that leaving the queen is a fault of the couple themselves that is why they criticize them while they are making interview to talk about their suffering at their home.

Table (2) the Language of Cyber Bullying

Number of the Comment	Semantically	Harry	Meghan	The Pair
1	Toad, dutchess	1		
2	Prince Harry and the court jester	1		
3	They left England			1
4	For a pair…. With a smile and wave			1
5	Two losers			1
6	Selfish people			1
7	Suit case girl		1	
8	The prince and the showgirl			1
9	They Embarrassment			1
10	Money grabbing pair			1
Total		2	1	7

Many of the commenters use different semantic words with negative meaning for making cyber bullying. Both Harry and Meghan are described by various impolite words toad, suitcasegirl, selfish people, two losers, money grabbing pair, embarrassment, etc. these negative words are used to indicate the anger and attack of the British society to those two pair.

Throughout the comments, British people affirm that they do not care about anything that relates to those pair and they ensure that the decision that is done by the pair is wrong and they deserve what will face in the future.

* Conclusion

Cyber bullying is a device that is used heavily in social media specially Facebook. Many of British people bully Harry, Meghan, Oprah and even the channel itself for their heavily shows and interviews and for their accusation for the Queen. The commenters (male, female) are using tough words in their comments because they feel angry.

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