



Exploring Gender Dynamics: A Linguistic Analysis of Gender Representation in Najib Mahfudz's Novel *Bidayah wa Nihayah*

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Abstract

The researcher's findings from the Novel *Bidayah Wa Nihayah* are very interesting to study in more depth regarding the analysis of gender representation (language describes characters based on gender). This research analyses the language used to portray characters based on gender and gender stereotypes in "*Bidayah Wa Nihayah*." This study contributes to understanding the language differences men and women use in "*Bidayah wa Nihayah*," providing insight into linguistic features employed by each gender. The findings from my research are quite intriguing, particularly regarding the representation of gender language in the novel "*Bidayah wa Nihayah*" by Najib Mahfudz. The study reveals the use of filler words, mitigators, and address terms. Filler words and mitigators indicate a representation of gender language that reflects male dominance and the oppression of individuals. This representation is also evident in the dominance of male characters in conversations. Female characters use language to establish, maintain, and develop personal relationships, while males view language as a tool for conveying information. Dominant gender language representation is found in the use of fillers and hedges in the conversations within Najib Mahfouz's novel "*Bidayah wa Nihayah*."

Keywords: *Representation; Gendered Language; Novel; Stereotypes*

Introduction

Gender issues remain a subject of frequent debate worldwide, particularly concerning equal rights and treatment between men and women. Despite progress in combating gender discrimination, many challenges persist (Sukmawati, 2019). A primary obstacle is the pervasive presence of gender stereotypes deeply embedded within society. These stereotypes often impede advancement toward gender equality. Gender stereotypes influence interpersonal interactions and impact career and educational opportunities accessible to each gender (Diahsafitri Tiyas, 2022). Expressly, gender stereotypes can limit career choices deemed appropriate for men and women, thereby restricting individuals from pursuing careers aligned with their interests. These stereotypes also shape societal perceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities men and women should assume within the household (Rokhim & Noorrizki, 2023).

Literary works often represent societal life during a specific period or microcosms. An author's imagination, derived from real-life experiences, is expressed through literary forms. Imagery constitutes the essence of literature, with imagination grounded in reality. Consequently, novels indirectly reflect events or phenomena rooted in actual circumstances or facts (Setyawan, 2021). Literary works also serve

as mirrors, enabling society to observe and comprehend the realities surrounding them (Nisya et al., 2024). Readers can experience and understand feelings and experiences that they may not have personally encountered through an author's imagination, fostering empathy and broader comprehension of diverse life situations (Abu Bakar & Muhammad Rusydi, 2022).

Gendered language refers to language that reflects, reinforces, or disregards gender roles and stereotypes within society. These language differences based on gender are influenced by historical and social developments (Jing, 2023). Women employ specific vocabulary to express particular effects upon them, whereas men tend to use assertive and concise vocabulary (Masran, 2022). Men often prioritize logic, which enables them to speak in a focused, direct, clear, logical, and goal-oriented manner after careful consideration and deliberation (Rahma Salbiah & Sumardi, 2021). Najib Mahfouz's novel "Bidayah wa Nihayah" highlights gender inequality experienced by female characters. Mahfouz concretely depicts gender-related issues and the characters' struggles to overcome poverty. In this novel, female characters frequently encounter discrimination and gender inequality in various aspects of life, from education to employment. They must strive for rights that should be inherently theirs, often hindered by persistent patriarchal norms. Nevertheless, the female characters in this novel demonstrate remarkable resilience and fighting spirit in the face of adversity. Several previous studies have examined this novel and related topics. Aulia et al. (2014) explored instances of gendered language, noting the frequent use of the term "prostitute" due to the novel's focus on gender inequality experienced by female characters. Agata and Saifullah (2022) found similarities in language features used by men and women in Instagram captions. Jing (2023) observed that women employ polite sentence structures as a communication strategy. Indriyani et al. (2024) support this by suggesting that gender imbalances still appear in textbooks.

Suwastini et al. (2023) determined that the textbook they analyzed represented gender language stereotypes using lexical hedges and fillers, empty adjectives, and intensifiers, alongside male dominance in conversations. Ghazali et al. (2023) "Bidayah Wa Nihayah" shows that there were a few similarities on the topic of poverty between both Novels. Prior studies primarily focus on themes of poverty, the image of Egyptian women, and structuralist analysis using Levi-Strauss's framework. Therefore, the researcher's findings from the Novel Bidayah Wa Nihayah are very interesting to study in more depth regarding the analysis of gender representation (language describes characters based on gender). This research analyses the language used to portray characters based on gender and gender stereotypes in "Bidayah Wa Nihayah." This study contributes to understanding the language differences men and women use in "Bidayah wa Nihayah," providing insight into linguistic features employed by each gender. Understanding these patterns can enhance communication skills and foster greater comprehension and appreciation for diverse perspectives from both women and men.

Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive study aims to reveal gendered language in Najib Mahfouz's novel Bidayah wa Nihayah through a sociolinguistic approach. This research focuses on the language used by several characters in Najib Mahfouz's novel. The data source for this research is Najib Mahfouz's novel, Bidayah wa Nihayah. The primary data in this study is the leading data used in the form of the novel. In contrast, secondary data supports the validity of primary data.

Table 1. Identification Table of Gendered Lexical Usage in Najib Mahfouz's Novel Bidayah wa Nihayah

No	Languages used	Number	Percentage
1	ربما (Might)	13	25.00
2	يمكن (Maybe)	60	39.00
3	يا له (Ah/Oh)	10	20.00
4	يعني (that's what I mean)	8	16.00
Total		91	100.00

The data collection techniques used in this research are observation and note-taking. First, the author reads and observes the entire novel's contents, then records the data relevant to this study. This is followed by examining the findings to be analyzed, then recording, collecting, and analyzing the data by the sociolinguistic study of language choice based on gender. The collected data will be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman analysis model, namely: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing. Data reduction in this research is carried out by grouping narratives and dialogues that utilize the sociolinguistic study of language choice based on gender. Data display is carried out by presenting narrative and dialogue texts from the novel "Bidayah Wa Nihayah" that have been analyzed. Then, the final stage of this research is to draw conclusions based on the conceptual framework of the sociolinguistic study of language choice based on gender.

Results and Discussions

The analysis reveals that gender concepts are conveyed through the dialogues and monologues of the novel's characters. The prevalence of these dialogues and narratives reinforces stereotypical gender roles. The representation of gendered language stereotypes in the novel "Bidayah Wa Nihayah" manifests in three categories specific to certain genders: the utilization of hedges and fillers, the forms of address employed, and the dominance of male voices within conversations.

Use ألفاظ الحشو (Fillers) dan ألفاظ التلطيف (Hedges)

Fillers and hedges are stereotyped as female language, signifying uncertainty and hesitation. Their use in utterances or phrases serves as a conversational pause to connect ideas or the next point and indicates a lack of self-confidence, doubt, uncertainty, and indecisiveness (Indriyana et al., 2021). Female characters in the novel frequently exhibit characteristics that express an inability to fully commit to a statement, such as the words "sort of," "perhaps," "I think," and "somewhat," where the function of these characteristics is to portray the hesitation of women in a subordinate position, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Identification of the Use of Fillers and Hedges in Female Characters

No	Language used	Type	Function	Chapter	Page
1	ربما (Might)	لِفاظ التلطيف	Might	7,16, 39, 43,52, 54, 56, 61, 78, 82, 84, 89.	20, 41, 104, 115, 142,146, 153, 190, 191, 212, 220, 226, 240.
2	يمكن (Maybe)	لِفاظ التلطيف	As a softener or to mitigate directness in conversation	12, 32, 37, 44, 45, 48, 49, 56, 57, 58, 59, 69, 71, 81, 82, 83, 84, 88, 91, 92.	31, 32, 41, 47, 50, 55, 58, 59, 66, 76, 83, 84, 89, 91, 98, 118, 122, 126, 127, 129, 133, 138, 139, 140, 146, 147, 150, 152, 154, 155, 157, 160, 162, 186, 190, 200, 202, 209, 216, 218, 221, 224, 226, 237, 245, 247, 250.
3	يا له (Ah/Oh)	لِفاظ الحشو	As a gap-filler in discourse	7,18,19, 29, 56, 63, 67, 75, 87.	21, 45, 48,75, 153, 171, 180, 205, 234, 235.
4	يعني (that's what I mean)	لِفاظ الحشو	Employed to occupy silences in dialogue without contributing to the semantic content.	6, 25, 33, 37, 45, 60, 78, 84.	17,64, 86, 100, 122, 165, 213, 225.

Table 2 illustrates the use of conversational fillers and softening words employed by female characters in Najib Mahfouz's novel, Bidayah Wa Nihayah. Four types of hedges and fillers were identified "يعني", "يا له", "ربما", "يمكن". Hedges word "ربما" appears 13 times in the novel, while hedges

“يمكن” appears 60 times in the novel. Filler words “يا له” appears 10 times in the novel, while the filler “يعني” Hedges appear 8 times in the novel and function to soften commands and indicate the doubt expressed by the female characters. Fillers, on the other hand, serve to give the speaker time to consider what they will say next.

1. Usage of Lexical Hedges “ربما”

The function of hedges is to avoid making explicit statements and thus sound more polite (Azizah, 2021). Using the female language framework by (Lakoff, 1973, dan Gooch, 1973) They tend to make indecisive statements such as “ربما” means might. The following example is taken from the novel *Bidayah Wa Nihayah* in the conversation of male and female characters. In the novel *Bidayah Wa Nihayah*, hedges words “ربما” used thirteen times to soften commands and signal doubt. The use of “ربما” in data (1) is meant to signal doubt. As follows;

(1) وهي تقول: خذ هذه؛ **ربما** لم يكف ما بالشاي من سكر.

“He said: Take this, there might not be enough sugar in the tea.” (Mahfudz, 2013:41)

Data (1) is a conversation between an older brother named Hasan and his younger sister named Nafisah. Hasan told Nafisah to get some sugar because he thought the tea wasn't sweet enough. Hasan's use of the language ‘Might’ in this context signifies his doubt and ignorance of the domestic work commonly done by female This finding shows that the use of hedges in the form of “ربما” does not only occur in female but also in male. This is in line with research (Alhammadi et al., 2024) That hedges can be used by both genders, male and female, but the frequency of use is different between male and female. As the following data;

(2) فما من سبيلٍ إليهن إلا بنصر إن آجلا أو عاجلا. فحظه في الحياة، و**ربما** حظ أسرته المنهارة

“There was no way for them except by winning, sooner or later. His luck in life, and might his family's crumbling fortune.” (Mahfudz, 2013: 104)

(3) ثم قال باقتضاب وهو يُكابِد شعورا غليظا بالتشاؤم والخوف: **ربّما**.

“Then he said succinctly, suffering from a heavy sense of pessimism and fear: It Might.” (Mahfudz, 2013:226)

(4) لكن فيم يفكر وهو يعلم بأنه لن يُخيب لحسنني رجاء؟ **ربّما** كان بوسعه أن يزجره لو لم يُفرق بينهما هذا البعاد.

“But what was he thinking, knowing that he wouldn't let me down? Might he could have scorned her if he hadn't separated them from this dimension.” (Mahfudz, 2013:142)

(5) ووقع المحذور! وقال: الحق أن حسان أفندي رجل طيب. **ربّما** لم أقابله بطبيعة الحال.

“And the warning was signed! He said: The truth is that Hasan Effendi is a good man, might it has never met him, of course.” (Mahfudz, 2013: 146)

In data (2), (3), (4) and (5) the words “ربّما” shows a sense of pessimism, fear, and compulsion. In general, females in conversation are often more expressive in showing emotions verbally and often use more words to describe their emotions. Whereas male, as seen in the text, are more concise and may choose not to express emotions in detail, but briefly as in the expression **ربّما** (Might) which is simple but full of meaning.

2. Usage of Lexical Hedges “يمكن”

Hedges produced to express the inability to fully commit to the value of a statement, such as ‘you know’, ‘kinda,’ ‘I think’ ‘might’, and ‘maybe’ (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). It was found that female characters in the novel often feature these traits where the function of each type is aimed at displaying women's indecision in a subordinate position. One of the functions of hedges is to soften commands as expressed by Nafisah to her older brother as in the example of (6):

(6) ثم قال حسن مستدركا وكأنه يواصل حديثه : وفضلا عن هذا فلن ينقضى وقت طويل حتى تشتد حاجتنا

إلى الملابس! فتساءلت نفيسة في ارتياح : **أيمكن** أن تستعملوا ملابس أبي؟

He then went on to say, 'Moreover, we will soon need those clothes!' Nafisa asked in horror, 'maybe you'll be wearing my father's clothes?' (Mahfudz, 2013:31)

Data (6) occurred in a conversation between Nafisah and her older brother. In this conversation, the elder brother said that soon the family would be wearing his late father's clothes. Nafisah expressed her disagreement by using a weakening word for her brother's order with the question 'maybe'. These conversations reveal that female tend to use conversational hedges when talking to male. This strongly supports the stereotype that women when talking to men are the oppressed group and are less assertive and indecisive. (Sihombing, 2023). This finding supports the assumption that women speak politely due to their lower position than men in the social hierarchy. (Kasmiran & Ena, 2019). When female are unsure of something, they show their doubts through unconvincing language. This shows that female lack confidence in speaking and conveying their ideas, as in the following data :

(7) وأمنت نفيسة على الدعاء بقلبها، على ما أثار في نفسها من قائم الذكريات «متى **يمكن** أن أكون عروسا؟

Nafisa prayed in her heart, despite the dark memories that raged in her soul: 'maybe that I can become a bride?' (Mahfudz, 2013: 83)

Data (7) shows that Nafisah is praying when her heart is not calm when she hears the news about her lover's marriage to another. Nafisah prayed using the language of 'maybe' showing that Nafisah was weak and did not believe in herself and prayed using the language of doubt. The element of doubt in female's speech implies that they are unable to think clearly and engage in serious discussion. This finding suggests that female has less status in society, thus, expressions of uncertainty are favoured when speaking (Azizah, 2021).

(8) ثم قالت: فرش حجرة لن يُكلفك كثيرا، و**يمكن** أن تؤدي ثمنه مقسطا بضمائني إذا شئت.

"Then he said, 'Equipping the room won't cost much, and maybe you can pay for it in instalments with my guarantee if you want to.'" (Mahfudz, 2013: 138)

(9) ولكنني كنت أفكر طويلا فيما **يمكن** أن يلقى شابٌ وحيد في بلد غريب.

"But I thought for a long time about what a lonely young man could encounter in a foreign country" (Mahfudz, 2013:147)

(10) فتساءل بصوت حزين كأنه كان يتنبأ الجواب سلفا: ألا **يمكن** الانتظار؟ فقال الرجل بنرفزة : كلا.

'She wondered in a sad voice, as if she predicted the answer in advance: Is it maybe possible to wait? The man said agitatedly, "No.'" (Mahfudz, 2013:152)

Data (8), (9), and (10) Nafisah answered by using the word 'maybe' when talking to her older brother. Nafisah seemed unsure of her answer and may have been in doubt. This could indicate that Nafisah did not have full confidence in the information she conveyed to her older brother. Nafisah may be seeking reassurance or wanting to avoid conflict with her older brother. Nafisah feels uncomfortable or lacks confidence in communicating with her older brother. His use of the word 'maybe' may indicate that he is not sure or is still unsure of the information he is conveying. This shows that women often use lexical hedges when talking to others. This is very stereotypical as they speak to men as a group who are not assertive and always show indecision. This finding supports the assumption that women are often unsure of their own statements and thus use lexical hedges. (Utami, 2022).

3. Usage of Filler “يا له“

Filler words are utterances or phrases used in conversational pauses to connect the next idea or ideas (Indriyana et al., 2021). On the other hand, fillers serve a communication function, contributing to

the speaker's vocabulary. Fillers are not the main message, they only help to give meaning to the sentence (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). Another finding is the use of the filler word 'يا له' which is identified as appearing on page 35, as seen in data (11). :

(11) فقال الرجل باهتمام : طبعاً، طبعاً، إني فاهم كل شيء. هل أنت في حاجة إلى مساعدة ؟

فقلت : يا له من سؤال، إنها لا تملك إلا جنبيين هما ما تبقى من المبلغ الذي وجدته بمحفظة المرحوم.

“The man said carefully: Of course, of course, I understand everything. Do you need any help? Then he said: **Ahh** that question, He only had two pounds, that is, the rest of the amount he found in the wallet of the deceased”.(Mahfudz, 2013: 21). In data (11) a man named Hasan asks his younger sister Nafisah. When Nafisah answers her brother's question, she produces the filler word 'Ahh', which functions as a pause filler when someone is thinking or formulating the next words. (Taufik et al., 2023). The structure of literary works in the form of novels is very complex. One of the structures is the dialogue between characters and the narrative that is told. Dialogue between characters can be studied using sociolinguistic studies. The study involves analysing the language used by each character, including word choice, accent, and speaking style. (Holmes, 1995) argues that women's language is more polite and polite compared to men's language. Holmes' statement is evidence that the characteristics of women's language are different from those of men. As the language of women in the following quote that distinguishes from the language of men by using greetings.

(12) وعلى حين هرولت الخالة إلى الداخل وهي تصرخ يا خراب بيتك يا له اختى فدوت العبارة في آذانهم دويًا مفعجًا وعارود

الشابين البكاء .

“And when his aunt ran inside shouting, ‘**Oh**, the desolation of your house, my brother,’ the phrase rang in their ears as a heartbreaking sound, and the two young men began to cry again.”. (Mahfudz, 2013:15)

Based on data (12), it appears that the aunt character who is told to call Samirah as her younger sister with the greeting 'my sister' does not mention using names directly. This proves that the language of women in this novel is so polite and differentiates it from the language of men. In contrast to male language which directly calls by name without greeting first, as in the following quote :

(13) عن بعد رجل يهرول قادمًا ما أن وقع بصر حسن عليه حتى قال بارتياح كأنه كان ينتظره: يا له فريد أفندي محمد ؟ !

وكان القادم يجفف حبيبه على رغم لطافح الجو الخريفي ، ولكنه كان يدينا مفرطًا في البدانة.

“ for in the distance a man ran up to him, Hasan's gaze fixed on him until he said with relief, as if he had been waiting for him: Farid Efendi Muhammad! The next man was drying his grain”.(Mahfudz, 2013:11)

Data (13) shows a character named Hasan calling his uncle who is walking towards him. Hasan does not use greeting language and directly calls by the name of his uncle. This shows that there is no politeness language in the form of greetings used by men. This shows the difference between the language of women and men in this culture. Although it looks rude, the way Hasan calls his uncle shows the closeness and familiarity they have. This also reflects the social norms of the society in which the story takes place, where men tend to be more direct and open in their communication.

(14) وتشجع حسن بقولها فقال في ارتياح : يا له نطقت عن حكمة . وإني أذكرك بأني الوحيد الذي لا أكاد أختلف طولًا أو

عرضًا عن المرحوم أبي . وتناسى الشقيقان الحزن

“Hasan was encouraged by what he said and said it with satisfaction: Oh You speak of wisdom. And I remind you that I am the only one who can hardly, My length and breadth are different from the late” (Mahfudz, 2013:32)

(15) ثم قطع حسن الصمت قائلاً بلهجة تنم عن الحسرة : يا له من المؤسف حقًا أن المرحوم أبي على نفيضة أن تواصل

تعليمها في المدرسة . تصورا لو كانت أختنا مدرسة الآن

“Hasan then broke the silence, saying in a heartbroken tone: Ahh It's unfortunate that the late Abi Ali Nafisa continued her education at school, imagine if our sister was a teacher by now”.(Mahfudz, 2013:19)

Data (14) and (15) Hasan talking to Nafisah does not use polite greetings. The difference in treatment between men and women in using greeting words remains an interesting concern. Because of the gender stereotypes prevailing in the society that men have a hard character or temperament and women have a gentle temperament. This finding supports the assumption that women are expected to speak politely due to their lower position in the social hierarchy. (Svendsen, 2019).

4. Usage of Filler “ يعني ”

Filler is a pause in the speech, the pause is in the form of a sound that aims to fill the void in the speech (Ghozali & Arden, 2022). Fillers are used to fill in the blanks in a sentence, often used when a speaker or writer needs time to think, refine a sentence, or give it a certain emotional feel. In the context of literary writing, fillers can serve to strengthen the atmosphere, describe characters, or add beauty to the language. As in the following data :

(16) فقال وكأنه يُخاطب نفسه: ليتني لا أعود أبدا. ولم تُدرك ما **يعني**، ولكنها استجمعت شجاعتهَا وغمغمت : تسمع!

“He didn't realise what it meant, but he gathered his courage and muttered, that's what I mean: ‘Excuse me!’”(Mahfudz, 2013:165)

(17) وأدرك حسن ما **يعنيه** قبل أن يُتم كلامه، فتفكر دون أن يبدو على وجهه شيءٌ مما يدور في نفسه، ثم سأله : وما المرتب الذي تنتظره؟

“Hasan realised what she meant before she spoke, so he thought without showing anything on his face, that's what he mean and then asked her: How much salary are you waiting for ?”(Mahfudz, 2013:126)

(18) فتساءلت في حياءٍ وهي تدري ما **يعني**: لماذا تشكر الصيف؟

“She wondered shyly, knowing what it meant: Why thank summer?”(Mahfudz, 2013:100)

(19) فاحتدم الغيظ في صدرها وقالت: يا لك من جبان حقير! ألا تعرف ماذا **يعني** هذا بالنسبة إليّ؟

“Anger raged in his chest and he meant, ‘What a despicable coward! Do you not know what this means to me?’”(Mahfudz, 2013:86)

(20) أرجو ألا يسألني أحد عما قلت أو عما قالت؛ فهذا لا **يعني** أحدا سواي .

“Please don't anyone ask me that's what I mean or what he said”(Mahfudz, 2013:213)

Data (16), (17), (18), (19) and (20) The filler ‘يعني’ functions as an emotional emphasis showing that the first character feels burdened with her thoughts. It also slows down the flow of the sentence, giving time as if she is thinking. ‘يعني’ shows that Nafisah as the questioner is not just innocently asking, but has awareness and depth in her thoughts. The high level of filler usage related to the function is in line with the study conducted by (Nugraha & Tarmini, 2023) Revealed that according to participants assessing job interviews, the presence of fillers indicates a high level of anxiety.

The function of the filler in this data is to describe the anxiety and tension felt by the first character in the novel. Fillers can also show the doubts and confusion that the character is experiencing, thus giving the dialogue a sense of realism. The use of fillers is not only to fill in the blanks in the conversation but also as a tool to describe the emotional and psychological conditions of the characters in the novel (Gandeza, 2023). The filler is important in strengthening characterisation and building emotional depth in a literary work. Filler does not only serve as decoration or filler words but also as a powerful tool to convey messages and emotions in a literary work in the form of a novel (Dinkar et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The results of this study show that there are four findings said to be stereotyped, namely (1) Use of Lexical Hedges ‘ربما’, (2) Use of Lexical Hedges ‘يمكن’, (3) Use of fillers ‘يا له’, (4) Use of fillers ‘يعني’. The use of Lexical Hedges in the novel indicates uncertainty or possibility and softens or reduces assertiveness in conversation. Fillers in the novel *Bidayah Wa Nihayah* fill the pause in a conversation without adding meaning. The research provides theoretical contributions to discourse analysis and applied linguistics. By understanding the use of hedges and fillers in novels, readers can better understand the nuances of conversations between characters and the story's overall context. It can also help readers explore the novel's characters and understand the motivations and emotions underlying each conversation. Practically, this research provides a deeper understanding of the use of language in literary works, especially in the use of fillers and Lexical Hedges. Thus, this research enriches the reader's understanding of literary works and opens up space for further analysis of language use in novels. This research provides theoretical understanding and practical benefits for readers in understanding and enjoying literary works more deeply

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