

## **Language of resistance, gender and power in Tawakol Karman's Nobel Prize Speech (2011)**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents an analysis of the language of resistance used in Karman's Nobel Prize speech (2011). In this article, I wish to propose that Karman uses the language of resistance to different forms of social and political dominance and power in order to construct a new Arab feminine identity; and that this new identity is essentially constructed through linguistic means. In order to support this argument, I aim to analyze the themes and discourse strategies used by Karman in her speech. Drawing on work from several theoretical perspectives mainly gender studies, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, I will define power as a social and political tool of oppression that works as the driving force for resistance. Features of the language of resistance are analyzed through the use of specific discourse strategies and patterns particularly the discourse functions of personal pronouns; and finally, I aim to relate these discourse features of the language of resistance to current gender issues, power and sociolinguistic practices.

*Key word: Resistance, Gender Performance, Discourse Strategies, Power, and Arab Spring.*

### **Abbreviations**

Resistance discourse RD

Noble Prize NP

Human Rights HRs

Feminist linguistics FL

Women language WL

Feminist movement FM

MSA Modern Standard Arabic

Arab World AW

Arab Spring AS

### **Bio note on Karman's political and social activism as acts of resistance**

Before we embark on the analysis of Tawakol Karman's Nobel Prize (NP) speech, it would be useful to give a brief background on her profile as a politician, feminist, and human rights advocate in order to contextualize her NP speech.

Tawakol Karman (born 7 February 1979) is a Yemeni journalist, politician; a senior member of the of Al-Islah political party, human rights activist and a feminist who heads the group "Women Journalists Without Chains" (WJWC) which she co-founded in 2005. Throughout her career, resistance is an act well known to Karman. At the outset of the Yemeni revolution, she called Yemenis to support the "Jasmine Revolution," as she likes to call the "Arab Spring" to fight oppression, injustice and tyranny. She became the international public face of the 2011 Yemeni uprising calling for the end of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime.

She has been called by Yemenis the "Iron Woman" and "Mother of the Revolution." She is a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the first Yemeni, the first Arab woman, and the second Muslim woman to win a Nobel Prize and the youngest Nobel Peace Laureate to date.

## **1. Introduction**

It seems obvious that at times of major social and political change such as the Arab Spring (AS), social constructs such as gender, power relations and discourse practices undergo drastic changes too. Investigating those changes not only traces these changes as they occur, but helps reexamine issues and theories of gender and sociolinguistic practices. In the next section, I will define resistance in relation to power through using empirical evidence from Karman's speech; section 2 will review major trends in feminine linguistics and approaches to women language WL, gender identity and gender performance; then section 3 analyzes features of resistance discourse as revealed in the themes and particularly the discourse functions of the personal pronoun scheme used; finally, section 4 will tackle the implications this might have on gender and sociolinguistic theories.

### **1.1. Resistance and Power**

To understand "the language of resistance" used by Karman in her NP speech and to frame the definition in relation to power, it might be useful to draw an analogy from Newton's law of driving forces and resisting forces in physics. The driving forces i.e. "power forces" and the resisting forces operate in opposite direction until equilibrium is restored. In Foucault's (1982) illuminating article *The Subject and Power*, he suggests a new approach to understand power relations which simply "consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point" [...] "It consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used" (p.780). Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies [...]. And he adds that "in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations" (p.780).

### **1.2. Karman's Political and Social Resistance Discourse**

Before we embark on the analysis of Karman's language of resistance, it is important to investigate how she manages to pinpoint forces of oppression and dominance as the driving forces that led to acts of resistance in the Arab World (AW). She speaks about peaceful resistance as a human need and a basic right for those oppressed to get their legitimate rights; a necessary action against all forms of oppression and subjugation: whether sexist, social, political, local, or global; and finally, she talks about resistance as a peace-keeping tool since it is the only guarantee that social and political equilibrium will be restored. She says:

#### **Extract 1**

• إن شعوبنا العربية الثائرة سلمياً و بشكل حضاري رزحت عقوداً طويلة من الزمن مقموعة و مقهورة من قبل نظم حاكمة مستبدة طاغية أو غلت في الفساد و نهب أموال و ثروات شعوبها و سلبتها كل حرياتنا و حقوقها الطبيعية في الحياة الكريمة و المشاركة في إدارة شئون حياتها و مجتمعاتها و غيبتها تماماً عن وجودها الأنساني المشروع و نشرت الفقر و البطالة لضمان تأييد سيطرة حكامها في الحكم و العمل علي فرض افراد عائلتهم حكماً بالتوريث. أقل إن شعوبنا المظلومة هذه تثور اليوم معلنة انبلاج فجر جديد ، السيادة فيه للشعوب و إرادتها التي لن تقهر بعد اليوم ابدأ، و قد عقدت عزمها علي الأعتناق و السير في ركب الشعوب الحرة المتمدنة في العالم من حولها.

• The Arab people who are revolting in a peaceful and civilized manner have, for so many decades, been oppressed and suppressed by the regimes of authoritarian tyrants who have indulged themselves deeply in corruption and in looting the wealth of their people. They have gone too far in depriving their people of freedom and of the natural right to a dignified life. They have gone too far in depriving them of the right to participate in the management of their personal affairs and the affairs of their communities. These regimes have totally disregarded the Arab people as a people with a legitimate human existence, and have let poverty and unemployment flourish among them in order to secure that the rulers and their family members after them will have full control over the people. Allow me to say that our oppressed people have revolted declaring the emergence of a new dawn, in which the sovereignty of the people, and their invincible will, will prevail. The people have decided to break free and walk in the footsteps of civilized free people of the world (Karman, 2011, para. 12).

As an Arab feminist, she also calls for civil, political, economic, and social rights and freedoms as basic human rights granted to men and women equally. These rights encompass freedom and democracy which “liberate human energy” and get both men and women to share in the making of ‘human’ civilization. They are based on the notion of personal human dignity and worth- be it man or woman. Karman describes quite poignantly the regulative power of the polarized labeling and the conflicts that those labeling practices help produce. Here, she says:

## **Extract 2**

• كما أمنت دائماً بأن الحضارة الأنسانية هي ثمرة لجهد النساء و الرجال معاً ، و متي غبنت المرأة و منعت حقها الطبيعي في هذه العملية ، تكشف عورات المجتمع و باننت علله الحضارية بما يتأذي منه في نهاية الأمر المجتمع كله برجاله و نسائه. إن حل قضايا المرأة لا يمكن أن يتحقق إلا في مجتمع حر ديمقراطي تتحرر فيه طاقة الإنسان ، طاقة النساء و الرجال معاً. فحضارتنا تسمى الحضارة الأنسانية غير منسوبة لرجل أو امرأة.

- I have always believed that human civilization is the fruit of the effort of both women and men. So, when women are treated unjustly and are deprived of their natural right in this process, all social deficiencies and cultural illnesses will be unfolded, and in the end the whole community, men and women, will suffer. The solution to women’s issues can only be achieved in a free and democratic society in which human energy is liberated, the energy of both women and men together. Our civilization is called human civilization and is not attributed only to men or women (Karman, 2011, para. 3).

Here, resistance is defined not only as revolutionary acts on the ground but through the discourse that accompanies it. Karman’s speech is one example of how the AS revolutions and acts of resistance are framed and presented to the world through discourse. The speech is inspiring as it brings to light both the social and political aspects of resistance. Feminist linguistics has stressed this constructive role of language- how language constructs meaning and

shapes social relations. McConnell-Ginet writes about the importance of language in challenging existing social structures and ideologies; she (2011) states:

...language is fundamental to institutional arrangements—for example, law, religion, corporations, schools, media—and to the articulation, transmission, and reinforcement of cultural belief systems or ideologies. Language is also central to challenging existing structures and ideologies: political struggles of many kinds are fought to a considerable extent on linguistic terrain (p. 5-6).

In this context, Karman's NP speech is seen as a useful corpus of data that makes such links between power dynamics, resistance and gender issues in relation to language use. It relates gender empowerment to the wider context of political and social change that occurs in the AS countries. Through the analysis of the themes and personal pronoun scheme Karman uses, I argue that she has managed to create discourse that 1) constructs a new gender identity through taking on new leadership roles; 2) establishes social bonds with Arab rebels and women; and 3) exposes and challenges the internal and external forces of dominance and oppression. Section II below aims to relate Karman's RD to feminine linguistics and women language WL studies in general. It tackles the theoretical frame on which the analysis is based and poses the research questions.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Language and Gender: Dominance and Difference**

Since Lakoff's (1975) pioneering work, *Language and Woman's Place*, there has been a vast body of literature known as language and gender studies. Almost four decades after its first appearance, it has inspired a new paradigm of research seeking to disentangle the complicated interaction between language and gender with a variety of approaches and data. One of the fundamental questions the book poses is what, if anything, characterizes women's language (WL) which is primarily considered a social gender role women are taught to play.

To answer the question above, there are two major trends in studying gender-related aspects of language in use: the difference position and the dominance position (Cameron, 1992a, pp. 15–16). The first trend generally tackles the marked differences in the language strategies and language used based on gender; while the latter offers a critical perspective on unequal social relations sustained through these seemingly 'innocent' differences in language use. Both trends attempt to unveil the discursive construction of gender inequality in different societies and settings. The two positions mainly differ in focus: the dominance position explains gender-related differences in language use mainly on the basis of social status (Cameron, 1995a, p. 33). According to this position, women are socialized as part of their subordinate social position into using a language that consists of certain linguistic features connoting tentativeness, deference, and lack of authority. The difference position, in contrast, views the conversational styles of women not as a result of their subordinate social position, but as "a manifestation of distinctive female sub-cultural norms and values" (Cameron, 1992a, p. 15). For Tannen (1990; 1993 & 1994) what is displayed in the speech of both women and men is orientation to a particular set of values; for men the central one is status; for women it is connection or affiliation. In both trends, the diversity of the societies and domains of social practice from which gender discourse data are drawn give valuable insight into the social practices that systematically encourage and sustain male dominance and female subordination. Gender identity is a process that is affected to a large

extent by the cultural ideology in a certain society (see Cameron, 1998; Henley and Kramera, 1991; Wodak and Benke, 1996; Kotthoff and Wodak, 1997).

The two approaches, however, have been criticized because of their “massive generalizations about male and female speech,” (e.g. differences in speech styles have not been empirically validated in many settings- (see e.g. Ochs, 1974 & Sutton, 1995); and second, because of their lack of attention to the consequences of women’s use of language for their social position (Cameron, 1992a & 1995a). Such a criticism has merit because, as will be shown later, failure to recognize the use of language as an expression of power has the effect of perpetuating women’s exclusion from languages of power and thus of tending to maintain the status quo (Cameron 1995a, pp. 35–6 & 42) & (2003).

## **2.2. Feminist Linguistics and Gender Performance**

Recent work in Gender studies has specifically been concerned with the ways in which power relations interplay with gender issues and other forms of social inequalities such as: racism, social class and access or denial of access to power in certain minorities. The recommendation was that issues of sexism, racism, ethnicity and minorities (and the ways they intertwine) should be studied within the wider scope of power relations and their implications for social practices and language use (see e.g. Crawford, 1995; Eckert and McConnell- Ginet, 1992; Gal, 1992; Henley and Kramarae, 1991). Feminist linguists have considered the underlying issue of power as the driving force behind gender differences. Eckert and McConnell- Ginet (1992) note that “power has been the engine driving most research on language and gender, motivated partly by the desire to understand male dominance and partly by the desire to dismantle it (sometimes along with other social inequalities)” (p. 474).

Therefore, gender-related studies of language use have recently tended to broaden the scope of study to include issues of power, ideology; women empowerment; emancipation and social citizenship as reflected both in women’s discourse and discourse about women (see Lazar, 2005). Feminist linguistics (FL) is a major trend developed as a branch of linguistics using methods and approaches of critical discourse analysis (see Wodak, 1996) to investigate issues of gender. Quoting Marlis Hellinger (1990), Wodak (1997) states that FL goes beyond the analysis of female and male linguistic behavior to interpret “the person- related asymmetries in the field of language systems and language use as expressions of linguistic discrimination of women (sexism) and link them to social discrimination”. She adds that “FL does not accept phenomena as given, but seeks alternatives in keeping with the principle of the linguistic equal treatment of women and men. It pursues explicitly political goals by criticizing ruling linguistic norms and understanding the linguistic change it advocates as part of an overall change in society” (p.8).

The need for more discourse- oriented approaches to the study of gender is stressed and a paradigm shift is called for. In one sense, the study of gender and language has always been concerned with questions of representation. Gender differences are not inherent in languages; they are constructed through discourse. Since the early 1990s, research in the field of gender and language has been increasingly concerned with the ways in which the category of gender is represented, performed, and/or to a greater or lesser extent constructed in and through discourse- what is known as the performativity thesis (Butler, 1990). Research into the category of gender has been characterized by the so-called ‘move to discourse’ or ‘discourse turn’. Through the speech style of participants, one can tell the way the game is played between the powerful and the powerless. These insights have given rise to a substantial body of literature on the discursive

formation of gender identities in different forms of social interaction and communities (e.g. Bucholtz et al. 1999; Cameron 1992b, 1995b; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Hall and Bucholtz 1995; Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003; Johnson and Meinhof 1997; Mills 1995, 2003).

What interests us here is how different gender-related theories of language use attempt to offer different interpretations to the complex relationship between language in use and gender as a social construct. Some tackle the relationship between language ideologies and language use in relation to gender (e.g. Silverstein, 1979; Irvine 1989; Ochs 1992); others address the nature and substance of these ideologies (e.g. Cameron, 2003) while other researchers focus more on social interaction where language, ideologies and social constructs undergo a constant process of evolution and change mainly through the community of practice approach to gender performance (e.g. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003, 2005 & 2011).

### **2.3. Language Ideologies and the Community of Practice Approach to Gender Issues**

One of the pioneers who drew attention to the importance of language ideologies, Michael Silverstein, defined language ideologues as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (1979, p. 183) and regarded speaker awareness of language as capable of influencing the evolution of a language’s structure. Departing from Silverstein’s emphasis on language structure, Irvine (1989) provided a more socially oriented definition that recognizes language ideologies as potentially constructed in the interest of particular groups: ‘the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests’ (1989, p. 255).

Another attempt at theorizing the process through which the links between linguistic and social forms are maintained is Ochs’ (1992) theory of indexicality. Ochs (1992) explored how ‘gender ideologies are socialized, sustained, and transformed through talk, particularly through verbal practices that recur innumerable times in the lives of members of social groups’ (1992, p. 336) and identified two kinds of indexicality: direct and indirect indexicalities. The relationship between language and gender is largely established through indirect indexicalities, that is, through mediators such as stances, acts, or activities. Part of the “indirect indexicality” is how gender performance is constructed according to assumptions of what is or is not appropriate for men and women in different communities of practice or cultures. These beliefs on suitable gendered roles are reinforced during interactions, but can sometimes be questioned. For Mills (2005):

The notion of appropriateness is not ideologically neutral [...]. But this process is informed by wider societal norms of what behavior is considered to be gender-appropriate (p. 277).

Common beliefs about social norms verge on stereotypes. For example, stereotypical representations of appropriate feminine identity and communication in Western cultures involve notions of being nice, supportive and cooperative (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Mills 2005), while male speech is often described by researchers as being more competitive and aggressive. However, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) claim that the stereotype vision of gender discourse in a particular community should not be perceived as fake representations of people’s behaviors, on the contrary:

[They] constitute norms [...] that we do not obey but that we orient to. They serve as a kind of organizing device in society, an ideological map, setting out the range

of possibility within which we place ourselves and assess others. (McConnell-Ginet 2003, p. 87)

Hoffman (1989) also asserts that one's subjectivities are co-constructed with others who can accept or reject them and impose alternative identities instead. Often depending on the power balance, it is others who define who we are, putting us in a position where we have to accept or resist and negotiate these definitions. Since identities emerge from discourse, the language of the user becomes an important tool for establishing one's social identity.

In a paper entitled 'Gender and language ideologies', Deborah Cameron (2003) has made a valuable attempt to bring together these hitherto rather discrete literatures on gender and language, on the one hand, and language ideologies, on the other. Cameron (2003) further argued for a conceptualization of language ideologies as "sets of representations of language" rather than "beliefs" or "attitudes" relating to language, because the latter terms may imply ideologies as mental constructs and individual possessions. Instead, language ideologies should be seen as social constructs and "ways of understanding the world that emerge from interaction with particular (public) representations of it" (2003, p. 448). Here, Cameron proposes that the insights of work on language ideologies with its focus on 'representations' and 'belief systems' might fruitfully contribute to a critical re-appraisal of many of the traditional tropes in gender and language research, particularly notions of 'women's language' and 'gender difference' (Cameron 2003, p. 449).

Along the same line, community of Practice (CofP) – a third wave investigating language variation in relation to gender- made a very important contribution to the study of gender as a social category in relation to discourse. They no longer take the perspective that language variants function as identity markers of the groups that use the forms most often. Rather, variants are viewed as being 'fluid' and as functioning together to index qualities and stances, which in turn construct the social categories they have been believed to index. Through the use of a community of practice (CofP) approach, Eckert (2005, p. 16) sees the primary strength of the third wave as its name suggests, centers fundamentally on social practice. Sally McConnell-Ginet (2011) writes that:

Social practice theory shifts attention from passive indexing of pre-given demographic categories like a person's sex or age or socioeconomic status to the active creation of selves that may draw on such categories but give them new and diverse content (p. 89).

## **2.4. Shifts to Gender Empowerment and Resistance Discourse**

Since gender identity is a social and cultural construct, individuals might- in the process of political, geographic, cultural, and linguistic transitions- undergo drastic transformations in their understanding and discursive performance of gender. The changes that happen in the AW especially in the AS countries will certainly make women take on new social roles that might lead them to resist and subvert hegemonic notions of gender.

Studies of language use in relation to gender; therefore, should take in view not just how women are spoken of or taught to speak as a sign of social discrimination but how women use language that challenges those stereotypical views through their awareness of the power tactics involved in these practices. In other words, they should take as their main focus how women create discourse that challenges these views, and disentangle the game of the powerful versus the powerless; the oppressor versus the oppressed and the dominant versus the dominated. Such an

approach, in turn, leads us to see notions of gender as integrally related with other human rights activism, identity categories and social processes.

Introducing the concepts of resistance and empowerment to gender studies will open venues of academic research on human rights activism across the world. In a nutshell, it should take as its point of departure “resistance discourse”. An important step into this paradigm-shift is the field of academia itself; of what is brought to the highlight as subjects of research. DeFrancisco (1997) states that in order to make gender studies relevant to women:

...As researchers we (should) focus on the underlying political forces that create not only gender, but race, class and other experiences of oppression. [...] and that we focus our analysis on acts of resistance and emancipation.[...] we as researchers must do to move our field to an emphasis on power and activism (p.37). (My addition)

Themes of social citizenship and women emancipation as evidenced in the AS feminist discourse will make interesting areas of research. That gender identities and relations are differently articulated in different times and places is now axiomatic in language and gender studies, and there are regular calls for the field – historically a rather Anglo centric one –to investigate gender issues in a multi-cultural and global context. There is a need for the diversity of the societies and domains of social practice from which discourse data are drawn. Themes of emancipation and social citizenship as “resisting”/ empowering forces for women in a changing world should be investigated as they occur- which is interestingly displayed in some of the discourse data presented here.

## **2.5. WL and Gender Roles in the Arab World**

To relate the above literature to gender issues and women language WL in the AW, Arab women are certainly much more deprived and that is why Karman’s language of resistance is thoroughly revolutionary. The high rate of illiteracy, the prevailing patriarchal structures and the stereotypical representation of Arab/ Muslim women as passive, submissive and oppressed limit women’s presence in the public sphere. Being deprived of education and access to Modern Standard Arabic, Arab women are denied a voice in public life; the means to express their own views and share in politics.

Karman’s use of MSA is a kind of social and political capital especially in a country where the ratio of females attending secondary school is only (27%) (UNICEF report on Yemen, 2005-2010). It is certainly a sign of empowerment as it reflects higher level of education and access to the cultured, intellectual world which was previously dominated by men. Sadiqi (2003) notes this variety is not just a masculine language but the language of power, education, politics and the media which are mostly male dominated. Arab women are doubly disempowered in the sense that to be educated necessitates proficiency in Standard Arabic, and to be uneducated means public exclusion from public power.

As language is often a symbolic marker of self and group identity, Karman’s use of MSA can also be seen as an act of resistance. It is an answer to the claims that women emancipation movements in the AW are westernized movements which mainly aim at changing; if not obliterating, the Arab/ Islamic culture through degrading women. It solves the dilemma of preserving one’s Arab/Islamic identity and women getting their basic human rights of education, work and a fair share in public life. As such, I argue that Karman’s use of MSA is a tool of resistance through which she manages to create a new gender identity and take on new leadership roles; establish social bonds with other Arab rebels; expose the internal and external



forces of oppression and act against them; and above all, create discourse that reflects these new gender constructions.

## **2.6. Data and Method of Analysis**

In section 3 below, I will use Karman's NP speech (2011) as data for analysis. Since the focus of the analysis is mainly on the themes and personal pronoun scheme used, the Arabic text and an English translation of it are interchangeably used with no marked variation in meaning or pronoun use- i.e., whenever an extract of the Arabic text is cited, an English translation is offered. A qualitative approach is used to analyze the features of the language of resistance through investigating the themes and discourse strategies Karman used.

I will particularly investigate how Karman uses the 'I' pronoun in order to express her gender identity; assert herself and take on new social and political roles; the 'we/ they' pronoun to establish solidarity with Arab women, Yemeni/ Arab rebels and finally, the 'he' & 'Ø'/'you' pronouns to expose the driving forces of "power relations" behind acts of resistance and forcefully express her demands from the world community.

To address the research questions stated below, the analysis mainly focuses on the following research questions:

- 1- What are the themes and discourse strategies Karman used to resist forces of power, dominance and oppression?
- 2- Specifically, how did she strategically use the personal pronouns to create a new gender-identity; show solidarity with (Arab) women, fellow- rebels in Yemen and across the Arab World; expose forces of power and address the world community?
- 3- What does the language of resistance as manifested in the above discourse strategies reveal about gender theories and sociolinguistic practices?

### **3. The Analysis: Themes tackled in relation to the personal pronoun scheme:**

In this section, I will investigate the themes and discourse strategies used by Karman in her NP speech. I argue that under the umbrella theme of resistance, there are at least three sub-themes that are tackled in Karman's speech as reflected in the use of personal pronouns.

#### **3.1. Theme One: Display of self: the "I" in Karman's Speech**

It is interesting how Karman projects her self- image through the patterned use of the personal pronoun "I". She uses the 'I' pronoun to express her own female identity and as a way of self-assertion. This self- image mainly focuses on the following aspects: a) asserting herself through expressing her gratitude for the NP award; b) presenting herself as an Arab feminist, and c) a social and political leader. Throughout her speech, the three aspects of her gender identity are always intertwined; when she speaks about herself: it's "I" – an Arab Yemeni woman- her beliefs, her struggles, her feminist language and her aspiration- are all reinforcing her Arab/Yemeni feminist identity. Being thrilled and certainly empowered by the award- as the first Yemeni, the first Arab woman, and the second Muslim woman to win a Nobel Prize and the youngest Nobel Peace Laureate to date- Karman expressed her deepest gratitude for this international award and recognition. She says:

### **Extract 3**

بكل غبطة و سرور أعبر عن العرفان بالجميل لتشريفني و زميلتي المناضاتين من أجل السلام] ... [فشكراً لكم علي الجائزة التي أعتبرها تشريفاً شخصياً لي ، و لبلدي اليمن ، و للمرأة العربية ، و لنساء العالم ، و لكل الشعوب المتطلعة للحرية و الكرامة. اقبل الجائزة بإسمى و بإسم الشباب اليمني و العربي الثائر الذي يخوض اليوم نضاله السلمي ضد الفساد و الأستبداد بشجاعة أخلاقية و حكمة سياسية بالغة.

With joy and pleasure I would like to express my gratitude for the honour I was given together with my peace fighter colleagues, [...], for this international award, which carries great moral and human meaning. Thank you for the award, which I consider as an honour to me personally, to my country Yemen, to the Arab women, to all women of the world, and to all people aspiring to freedom and dignity. I accept the award on my behalf and on behalf of the Yemeni and Arab revolutionary youth, who are leading today's peaceful struggle against tyranny and corruption with moral courage and political wisdom (Karman, 2011, para. 1).

Reinforcing her gender identity, she particularly connects herself to two great Yemeni Queens- Bilqis and Arwa- well known for their wisdom and leadership skills. In the extract below, one can sense her patriotic pride and a celebration of the self as a Yemini/ Arab female; she says:

### **Extract 4**

و هاأنذا الآن أقف أمامكم في هذا الحفل العالمي المهيّب في لحظة فارقة من أهم لحظات التاريخ الأنساني، قادمة من أرض المشرق العربي ، قادمة من أرض اليمن ، يمن الحكمة و الحضارات القديمة. يمن التاريخ الممتد لأكثر من خمسة آلاف عام، يمن مملكة سبأ العظيمة ، يمن الملكتين بلقيس و أوري. اليمن التي تشهد اليوم أعظم و أقوى و أضخم ثورات الربيع العربي.

And here I am now, standing before you in this solemn international ceremony. Here I am, in this unique moment, one of the most important moments of human history, coming from the land of the Arab Orient, coming from the land of Yemen, the Yemen of wisdom and ancient civilizations, the Yemen of more than five thousand years of long history, the great Kingdom of Sheba, the Yemen of the two queens Bilqis and Arwa (Karman, 2011, para. 18).

In asserting herself as a social and political leader, Karman presents a fascinating way of bridging dichotomies that often figure in feminist analyses of women's lives: men versus women, universal human rights versus cultural specificity, the authentic or traditional versus Western imports, and East versus West. For example, she subtly draws on the shared pain of both sexes. Arab men and women alike are fighting against oppression, injustice, corruption and dominance in all its forms: whether in the form of the patriarchal ideology or in an oppressive and corrupt political regime. On the basis of shared oppression, or shared limitation of opportunity, both women and men equally suffered. There may be every variety of education, thought, class or habit; men and women may differ from each other by genes, nature or by social custom, yet they suffer from the same socio- economic and political conditions prevailing in many parts of the Arab world.

Along with other feminists and revolutionists in the Arab world, she strives to define their struggle for women's rights outside the frames of authentic traditions versus Western-influenced ideas or universal human rights versus cultural specificity that are often imposed by the broader political domain. The dilemma of keeping one's own "cultural" identity:

Arab/Islamic and at the same time obtain one's human rights as an individual and a civic citizen needs to be addressed and resolved especially if a huge sect in the Arab region- mainly women- is deprived of some of its basic human and civil rights under this pretext.

Culture has always been a site for much of the struggles for the rights of women in the AW. Those on the side of preserving culture tend to play the anti-colonist; anti-Arab identity or anti-Islam card; reminding Arabs of the Arab colonial past when the Arab identity was denigrated and Islamic practices were fought. They stress the importance of protecting culture as part of an anti-colonialist policy and a way of preserving the "Arab Islamic identity". Such a line of argument has instant appeal and makes sense to many Arabs. However, those claims that are based on custom and culture are often difficult to disentangle from disguised forms of political domination. They stand in the twilight zone of the cultural as well as the political. The dilemma is solved if freedom and democracy prevail and human energy of both women and men is liberated (see extract 2 p.5 above).

As Karman addresses those debates within the AW, her discourse also offers a modified version of Arab feminism to the Western world. Her presence and her speech certainly challenge the stereotype image of Arab Muslim veiled women in the Western media where it is not customary to see any signs of these women opposing, challenging or at least questioning any deal. The Arab Spring has certainly come to change this image of a veiled Muslim woman as an oppressed and passive victim who needs to be rescued by "Western democracy"; especially when the revolution itself allowed women into its ranks on all levels. Women's voices are heard leading chants and holding signs calling for President Ali Abd Allah Saleh's removal. Karman says:

Our peaceful popular youth revolution has succeeded in attracting to its ranks and marches hundreds of thousands of women who have fulfilled, and still fulfill, a major, noticeable and effective role in its activities, and in leading its demonstrations even to the smallest details. Not tens, but hundreds of these women have fallen as martyrs or been wounded for the sake of the victory of the revolution (Karman, 2011, para. 20 C).

Through her assertive language, Karman's speech comes not just to ably challenge this orientalist image of Middle Eastern women in the west; but it comes as a symbolic act of resistance to those in the AW who often connect women's liberation to a Western/ colonial scheme of degrading women. As a leader, Karman creates a vision of a new world that is void of these dichotomies and power relations; a new form of globalization where peace, tolerance, and freedom are granted to all. She quotes Alfred Nobel, Martin Luther King and Omar Ibn El Khattab: the three famous world- leaders who came from very different backgrounds and represented different forms of resistance. She quotes Alfred Nobel in his vision of peace; Martin Luther King in his call for tolerance- "the art of living in harmony"; and Omar Ibn El Khattab in his immortal statement about freedom, justice and equality: "Since when have you enslaved people, when their mothers had given birth to them as free ones.". Then, she puts forth her own vision of a better world if those particular values are guaranteed to all people equally.

### **3.2. Theme Two: Gender and Political Solidarity: the "we" side**

Along with Karman's presentation of the self, she also expresses her solidarity with Arab women and Arab citizens in the AS countries. This is shown in her presentation of the "we" to who she gets herself aligned. If we explore the entities that Karman particularly includes in her in-group the "we" side, we will find that her allegiances mainly fall into two categories: a) her gender allegiances with Arab women and women in general; and b) her political loyalty to Yemeni and Arab rebels. Karman's dual allegiances are not only subtly presented in the use of the "we" pronoun but almost always come intertwined with the "I". As shown above, whenever Karman presents herself, she almost immediately reverts to expressing her gender and political allegiances. The "I" is always embedded in the "we"- e.g. in dedicating the prize to other Arab women, Yemeni rebels and all youth rebels in the AS countries (see extract 3 above). Another example of the subtle interplay of "I" and "we" is revealed in the extract below where Karman beautifully describes the moment she received the news of the award in her tent in Taghyeer Square as one of the million rebels out there. The extract reveals mixed feelings of happiness, insecurity and a determination to continue that is shared by all the rebels.

### **Extract 5**

حينما بلغني خبر حصولي علي جائزة نوبل للسلام ، كنت في خيمتي في ساحة التغيير في صنعاء ، واحدة من الملايين من شباب الثورة ، لا نأمن فيها علي أنفسنا من قمع و بطش نظام علي عبد الله صالح... و لم يخفف من وطأة المفارقة الفادحة إلا فرحنا بأننا في الجانب الصحيح من التاريخ.

When I heard the news that I had got the Nobel Peace Prize, I was in my tent in the Taghyeer Square in Sana'a. I was one of millions of revolutionary youth. There, we were not even able to secure our safety from the repression and oppression of the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh... However, our joy of being on the right side of history made it easier for us to bear the devastating irony (Karman, 2011, para. 16).

Through her RD, "we" and "our" are also given in opposition to oppressive forces; they are represented as the main resisting forces to all forms of oppression, corruption and injustice. This is even more evident towards the end of her speech when she uses very strong and assertive messages to express the legitimate causes for the Yemeni Revolution and what it aspires to achieve socially and politically. Speaking on behalf of the Yemeni rebels and rebels in the AS countries, Karman not only projects her self-image as an Arab leader but, gives a very clear vision of what "our" Revolution aims to achieve. In six clear and distinct bullet points, Karman's repetition of "Our peaceful and popular youth revolution" comes as gunshots in the face of the oppressors. Through using a very strong and assertive language, she creates RD that defines what the revolution is about. The toughness, clarity and assertion in the language she uses certainly challenge WL's assumptions and more so the stereotypical images of Arab women in the AW and in the Western media. She says:

### **Extract 6**

ان ثورتنا الشبابية الشعبية السلمية ليست منعزلة و لا منقطعة عن ثورات الربيع العربي.

Our peaceful and popular youth revolution is not isolated or cut off from the revolutions of the Arab spring (Karman, 2011, para.19)

In her fight for freedom, equality and human dignity, Arab rebels and women are not the only entities Karman is seeking to align herself with; but human rights advocates all over the world. What unites people as human beings is the belief in human dignity and the basic values upon which human existence and happiness depend! The third allegiance accounts for her use of “a global we”. Through referring to “our global world” and “our civilization”, she projects her own vision of a world where peace, equality and fraternity prevail. This new globalization is only possible if basic human rights and values of peace, tolerance and freedom are respected- e.g. she speaks of “human civilization” where the efforts of women and men are equally respected; and a new form of globalization where universal human rights and values of freedom and justice are equally guaranteed. She says:

### **Extract 7**

فحضارتنا تسمى الحضارة الأنسانية غير منسوبة لرجل أو امرأة.

Our civilization is called human civilization and is not attributed only to men or women (Karman, 2011, para.3)

### **Extract 8**

يمكن القول إن عالمنا المعاصر الذي صقلته و أنضجته خبراته و تجاربه الطويلة بجلوها و مرها يسير بخطى متندة و واثقة نحو صياغة عالم جديد و عولمة مشرقة، عالم إيجابي ذو أفاق أنسانية ، و عولمة تحقق للبشرية قيم الحرية و العدالة و التعاون. عالم تقوم علاقاته و تعاملاته و شرائعه علي نفي و تحريم كل مظاهر و ممارسات استبعاد و استبعاد الأنسان لأخيه الأنسان ، و عولمة لا مكان فيها لسياسات الظلم و القهر و التمييز و الطغيان، عالم مفعم بالشراكة و التعاون و الحوار و التعايش و القبول بالأخر ، و عولمة تزول في ظلها و تنتهي إلي الأبد كل حالات اللجوء و الأحتكام الي شرعية القوة و جبروتها في إخضاع الجماعات و الشعوب و الأمم و إستلاب حرياتهم و كرامتهم الأنسانية . هل تراني أسرفت في الحلم...؟

One can say that our contemporary world, which has been refined and developed by expertise and long experience, good and bad, is marching with confident steps towards the creation of a new world and shining globalization. It will be a new and positive world with human prospects and globalization which will guarantee the values of freedom, truth, justice and cooperation to all human beings. It will be a world where all relationships, dealings and laws will be based on the prohibition of all forms and practices of exclusion and enslavement of man by man. This will mean a globalization with no policies of injustice, oppression, discrimination or tyranny, and a world full of partnership and cooperation, dialogue and coexistence, and acceptance of others. This will mean a globalization where resorting to the law of power and its might, against groups, peoples and nations, in order to deprive them of their liberty and human dignity, will disappear, once and forever. Am I dreaming too much ..? (Karman, 2011, para. 6)

Through this new globalization, Karman tries to project her own vision of a new global world; a “we” that could incorporate different cultures and religions. In her call for cultural and political tolerance, she tries to restore the important cultural, religious, and social linkages- that could exist prior to colonialism between the Middle East and the Western world- if rights of the individual, citizenship values and religious tolerance are respected by all. In opposition to Samuel Huntington’s (1993) “clash of civilizations”, her vision of peace is through “a pluralistic world” where diverse cultures and religions can coexist in harmony.

### **3.3. Theme Three: Exposing the internal and external forces of power, oppression and subjugation as the driving forces for resistance: The “he”/“they” vs. “Ø”/“you” personal pronouns in Karman’s Speech:**

To expose forces of power and subjugation in the AW, Karman chooses between two strategies- either direct exposure and open attacks against these forces or implicit reference depending on whether these driving forces are internal or external. The two strategies are generally marked by the personal pronoun scheme used in each case. So, in exposing internal forces of power, she tends to openly confront and expose using “he” or “they”. The targets of her open attack are mainly oppressive rulers in the AW (particularly Ali Abd Alla Saleh) and the corrupt political, economic and social system that creates social and political power relations of dominance and subjugation. However, in addressing external forces of power such as colonialism, imperialism and forces of globalization, Karman opts for implicit reference through using agentless and passive structures. Here, she uses a zero “Ø” pronoun or such generic words such as “Mankind”, “humanity” and “the conscience of humanity” to avoid open confrontation and accusation. The strategy changes only when she calls for the world community to rise to its global responsibilities towards the AS countries. In this case, she uses the direct pronoun “you” to convey very strong messages and a tone so stern.

#### ***3.3.1. Exposing Internal Forces of Power and Oppression:***

Since resisting forces act oppositely of driving forces, the AS itself- as Karman points out- defines those internal driving forces. Karman spoke about the Arab peoples’ bitter struggle against their oppressive rulers; their war against “despotic rulers ... who directed their weapons against their own people and betrayed their trust”. She also talked about young Arab people who got harvested by the machine of death for their legitimate struggle for democracy, freedom and justice. She called Ali Abdullah Saleh a dictator and a tyrant who killed his own people. She pinpointed and openly exposed different forms of oppression and subjugation in the AW (see extract 1 above)

In her resistance discourse RD, she fought against forms of corruption and power whether exercised through a single political party; looting of economic resources or through social and cultural practices that reinforce systems of dominance of a certain sect or group. In reconstructing her gender identity, Karman also fought a much more important battle against another form of subjugation which Fouclout (1982) defines as “subjugating the individual through defining who s/he is and assigning him/her certain social roles”. She firmly stood in opposition of the patriarchal practices which define women’s roles and deprive them of their right to share in public life. Fouclout (1982) writes about this form of subjugation that dictates “who we are” and “who we should be”:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power

which subjugates and makes subject to. Generally, it can be said that there are three types of struggles: either against forms of domination (ethnic, social, and religious); against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission) (p. 781).

Throughout the speech, Karman refuses and challenges those cultural/ political definitions of “who Arab women are and who they should be”. She attempts to redefine herself and gender roles in the AW. Arab women’s actual participation in the revolution has resulted in the presence of female heroines. The presence of some legendary women has thus given the new generations of Arab women role models of rebellious and brave women who have effectively transgressed the boundaries of local customs to take on new roles in the revolution. Karman speaks about Yemeni women’s sacrifices and heroism in:

### Extract 9

ان ثورتنا الشبابية الشعبية السلمية العارمة استطاعت ان تجذب الي صفوفها و مسيرتها مئات الالاف من النساء اللاتي قمن و لازلن يقمن بدور رئيسي كبير و ملحوظ و فعال في أحداث الثورة و قيادة مسيرتها بل قيادة كل تفاصيلها ، و قدمن العشرات بل المئات من الضحايا شهيدات و جرحي في سبيل انتصار الثورة.

Our peaceful popular youth revolution has succeeded in attracting to its ranks and marches hundreds of thousands of women who have fulfilled, and still fulfill, a major, noticeable and effective role in its activities, and in leading its demonstrations even to the smallest details. Not tens, but hundreds of these women have fallen as martyrs or been wounded for the sake of the victory of the revolution (Karman, 2011, para. 20 C).

### 3.3.2. Exposing External Forces of Power

Interestingly, in addressing the International world community, Karman employs a mixed strategy of either implicit reference i.e. a zero Ø pronoun as stated above or the use of a direct “you”. Karman is certainly well aware of the impact of the AW colonial and post-colonial history on the state of corruption the AW suffers from at present. Yet, she implicitly refers to the Arab nation colonial history, years of oppression and war destruction to minimize direct attack and accusations to the world community. In the extract below, she used agentless structures to refer to the killing of millions of people in the AW and worldwide in World Wars -

### Extract 10

منذ تقديم أول جائزة نوبل للسلام عام 1901، مات الملايين من البشر في حروب كان من الممكن تفاديها بشئ من الحكمة و الشجاعة. و كان للبلاد العربية حظها من هذه الحروب المأساوية.

Since the first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901, *millions of people have died in wars which could have been avoided with a little wisdom and courage*. The Arab countries had their share in these tragic wars... (Karman, 2011, para. 4).

In the extract below, she also uses generic words such as “the history of humanity” and “the human conscience” along with passive structures to refer to the war destruction caused by the west in ancient and contemporary history; she says:

## Extract 11

و مع ذلك ، فإن تاريخ الأنسانية و رغم منجزه العلمي الكبير ظل تاريخاً ملطخاً بالدماء. فالملايين قد سقطوا ضحايا في مسيرة قيام الممالك و سقوطها ، التاريخ القديم يقول ذلك! التاريخ الحديث يؤكد! و الشواهد الماثلة اليوم تقول أن جوهر الرسائل الداعية للسلم قد ديس عليه مراراً ، و إن الضمير الأنساني كثير ما علت علي صوته أصوات القاذفات و الراجمات و القنابل و كل وسائل القتل!

However, in spite of its great scientific achievements, *the history of humanity is stained with blood. Millions have fallen victims in the rise and fall of kingdoms.* That is what ancient history tells us and what recent history confirms! Today's recent evidence tells us that *the essence of messages calling for peace has repeatedly been trampled, and the human conscience has often been overrun by the voice of warplanes, rocket and missile launchers, bombs and all means of killing* (Karman, 2011, para. 4)!

This subtle use of agentless structures not only reveals Karman's sense of audience; but her courage and wisdom as well. She has deliberately avoided any accusation to the west or to the international world community; instead, she has reinforced their global responsibility. The message she gives to the world is one of hope and practicality: hope that the world community has learned from its history and will hopefully stand on the right side of history this time. She stresses the fact that "mankind's feeling of responsibility to create a decent life and make it worth living with dignity, has always been stronger than the will to kill life" (Karman, 2011, para. 5). This strategy comes to reinforce her practicality. After all, being a visionary does not mean abandoning practicality altogether but rather harnessing it creatively to get the world community to support the AS revolutions; a practicality that does not stop her from making a direct critique of the World community's unexplained silence, "caution" and lack of support to the AS revolutions. In using "you" to address the world community, she tends to focus more on the Arab revolutionists' demands and throughout the demands part, her language came out strong, frank, assertive and demanding. She asks the world community to act upon the very same values it advocates in the international human rights declaration and calls for the well-established doctrines of democracy; human rights and social justice. She says:

## Extract 12

- أيها الأعضاء...نرسل للعالم من خلالكم و عبر محفلكم العالمي العظيم رسالة واضحة و معبرة تؤكد فيها...
- و علي العالم اليوم أن يكون جاهزاً و حاضرأ لمساندة شباب الربيع العربي في كل مراحل نضالهم من أجل الحرية و الكرامة. [...]إن علي العالم الديمقراطي الذي حدثنا كثيراً عن فضائل الديمقراطية و الحكم الرشيد ، ألا يدبر ظهرة لما يحدث في اليمن و معها سوريا و قبلهن تونس و مصر و ليبيا و في كل بلد عربي و غير عربي تواق للحرية. فكل ذلك هو مخاض ديمقراطي عسير يستوجب الدعم و المساندة لا التخوف الحذر.
- Through *you and your great universal forum*, we send to the world a clear and expressive message in which we emphasize that...  
Today, *the world should be ready* and prepared to support the young Arab spring in all stages of its struggle for freedom and dignity. [...]  
The democratic world, which has told us a lot about the virtues of democracy and good governance, should not be indifferent to what is happening in Yemen and Syria, and happened before that in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and happens in every Arab and non-Arab country aspiring for freedom. All of that is just hard labour during the birth of



democracy which requires support and assistance, not fear and caution (Karman, 2011, para. 23).

#### **4. Discussion**

So far, the analysis has pointed out some of the features of the language of resistance used by Karman through the investigation of the specific themes and discourse strategies she used in her NP speech. Those features can be summarized as follows: 1) using the “I” pronoun to create a new gender identity through taking on new leadership roles; 2) using the “we” pronoun to establish social and political bonds with other oppressed groups; 3) and finally employing a mixed pronoun strategy to expose, challenge and dismantle the internal and external forces of oppression and act against them. Through her RD, she not only subtly manages to create new gender constructions but creates a vision of the world that is void of these dichotomies and asymmetrical power relations.

The scope of resistance in Karman’s linguistic behavior is thoroughly revolutionary. It contrasts with the assumptions and findings found in the “difference”, “dominance” literature. It gives empirical evidence that chains of social and political power relations of dominance can be broken through RD. We might agree or disagree about whether “difference” and “dominance” approaches to WL offer an accurate interpretation of the language patterns used by women in different communities; yet, what is more worth our while is to stress the fact that these patterns can be challenged and changed. Women’s language WL, as Lakoff (1975) and (Holmes, 1995) conceived it, is distinguished in particular by the use of mitigating devices which reduce the force of utterances, and by the avoidance of strong or aggressive language. Cameron (1994) defines the notion of verbal hygiene as “ways of using language [which] are functionally, aesthetically, or morally preferable to others” (p. 383). The question is how far these generalizations hold empirically in the language used by Karman in her NP speech.

The implications of Karman’s language of resistance for gender construction and language use are compelling. If we view gender identity and linguistic social practices not as static but as a practice embedded in real life contexts and in the multiple realities of social and political changes as those witnessed in the AS countries, then the various social practices may lead us to discover that they contain and represent not only stereotypical representations of how women should speak or be, but also elements that further women’s empowerment and emancipation. There are multiple incidents where women stand up against being defined by social norms or stereotypical representations and define themselves as social and political activists, it could be helpful to consider whether the alternative definition offered by the women is more representative of social reality as in the case of Karman’s speech. This could be taken up in debates against WL assumptions and particular trends in feminine linguistics. Such a change of language inspired by women’s actual use of language is much more likely to be acceptable than reforms coming from linguistic theorizing such as the attempts to change sexist forms in language use. In this way, language can be regarded as a social and political capital resource for gender empowerment and emancipation.

In analyzing Karman’s resistance discourse, it becomes clear how language and gender are both subject to processes of discursive formation. The analysis gives empirical evidence that language patterns and social practices are not “fixed” but are liable to change once the users—here women—consciously and courageously choose to change them. Though constrained by the ideologies and socialization mechanisms that prevail in a certain community; yet, language users

can still challenge and reconstruct these ideologies and mechanisms. To this effect, McConnell-Ginet (2011) writes:

Speakers develop linguistic patterns as they engage in activity in the various communities in which they participate. Sociolinguists have tended to see this process as one of acquisition of something relatively ‘fixed’—the linguistic resources, the community, and the individual’s relation to the two are all viewed as fixed. The symbolic value of a linguistic form is taken as given, and the speaker simply learns it and uses it, either mechanically or strategically. But in actual practice, social meaning, social identity, community membership, forms of participation, the full range of community practices, and the symbolic value of linguistic forms are being constantly and mutually constructed. And so although the identity of both the individual and the individual community of practice is experienced as persistent, in fact they both change constantly. We continue to adopt new ways of talking and discard some old ways, to adopt new ways of being women and men, gays and lesbians and heterosexuals, even changing our ways of being feminists or being lovers or being mothers or being sisters. In becoming police officers or psychiatrists or physicists or professors of linguistics, we may change our ways of being women and perhaps of being wives or lovers or mothers (p. 102).

The last remark makes a subtle connection between taking on new roles and changing language patterns. The language variety speakers use; the way they talk about themselves, or things, i.e., the subject positions they take, reflect their identities; when speakers change the way they talk about things, adopt a particular variety, or assume new roles, their identities change accordingly. Taking on new roles through social and political activism develops new discourse that leads to women’s empowerment and emancipation. Social roles – e.g. gender roles and the language patterns that associate with them are observed to be in constant reconstruction, formulation and recreation.

Similarly, social categories and stereotypical characterizations such as “an Arab woman” or a “Muslim veiled woman” are human creations; the concepts associated with them are not replicas waiting for labels to be attached; but can either be sustained, or transformed and created afresh by social processes and discourse. Though misrepresentations through labeling and stereotypes reflect social norms of appropriate feminine identity and forms of communication (e.g. the stereotypical image of an Arab woman as being passive, submissive, oppressed or somebody not to be seen or heard); yet, this is misleading inasmuch as it obscures the very important fact that labeling is a socially significant and contested practice within the community and is part of the continual construction of the categories it designates.

Creating a new self-identity that challenges such gender stereotypes can subtly be done through discourse. Women’s linguistic choices can provide one way to get at women’s own perspective on their lives; what identities they want to have, new roles they want to play and what stance they want to take. What sociolinguists call the linguistic repertoire that speakers draw upon in different forms of interaction can indicate or recreate any or all of the following factors: self/ social identity, social bonds and utility. Karman’s exploitation of the personal pronoun scheme to construct a new gender identity confirms that what sociolinguists call the linguistic repertoire is a set of resources that speakers can utilize for the articulation and construction of those new identities and social roles. It is a resource for constructing community members’ relation to power structures, locally and more globally. The realization that those patterns and roles can be challenged the way Karman did is extremely significant. It remains at the hands of women to accept or question and challenge those roles with courage and wisdom.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have investigated the language of resistance used by Karman in her NP speech (2011). Through the analysis of Karman NP speech, I have addressed issues that are seen as most pertinent to the study of gender and language: namely, issues of women's empowerment and activism. Instead of discussing the linguistic practices of women as simply a reflection of language and gender ideologies or the processes and consequences of the reproduction of these ideologies as two important themes of inquiry in contemporary language and gender studies; this study has focused on using discourse that challenges those ideologies and stereotypical representations.

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