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A Study of Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Language Issues of Gender Representation in Selected Literary text

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Abstract

Stylistics is the analysis of the language of literary texts integrated within various approaches to create a framework of different devices that describe and distinct a particular work. Therefore, feminist stylistics relied on theories of feminist criticism tries to present a counter- image of a woman both in language use and society, to draw attention , raise awareness and change ways that gender represents. Feminist stylistic analysis is related not only to describe sexism in a text, but also to analyze the way that point of view, agency, metaphor, and transitivity choices are unanticipatedly and carefully connected to issues of gender(Mills,1995:1)

The study tries to discuss matters of gender representation in stylistic analysis and how questions and messages of gender are deducted and exposed when reading and interpreting a text. Moreover, the concept of transitivity and how meaning is encoded and adopted by different patterns of transitivity will be analyzed and investigated.

The study has shown that transitivity patterns are used as a device to analyze gender representation as well as to describe the ideational meaning which involves the experiential realization of the world. The results of the analysis of transitivity choices of the selected romantic scene have shown that the whole number of processes are nineteen, the female does five processes in her role as an actor, whereas male shows fourteen which are the highest number in his performance. The male appears to be the active participant agent who is conscious and in control of his action, whereas the female appears to be passive in her quality, volition and being affected or recipient actor. Also, it is seen that feminist analysis tries to create a new message and picture of woman position; this is depicted by the essential role of the readers' assumption and contextual factors of the text in the process of interpretation.

Key words: feminist stylistics, gender, sexism, transitivity choices

1. Introduction

Feminist stylistic notions are more interested in displaying these feminist views that exist in texts, whether they are prototypically patriarchal or not. It also observes how linguistic devices are capable of indicating the shift from a fundamental dichotomous comprehension of the concepts of maleness and femaleness, to a more overall definition of the idea of gender as non – distinctive , because these genders do not form a homogenous discrete group (Norgaard et al.,2010:19).

In the present study, a feminist stylistic work of gender difference and representation will be discussed and how readers react, and redefine a particular word and expression in the text. It is hypothesized that feminist stylistics is a sub branch of stylistics dealing with the ways in which gender affairs are tackled in a linguistic analysis of language to expose the processing of gender at a framework of different levels of the text. The procedures followed in this study are exploring the feminist stylistics approach and how sexism in language can affect readers' assumptions. Furthermore, material and mental patterns of transitivity choices will be analyzed according to the Mills' model(1995) of feminist stylistics.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, studies in feminist stylistics and issues of gender representation in language analysis are rare, so this study is a contribution to the field of stylistic analysis and literary studies .

2. Feminism

Feminism can be termed as a range of social, political and ideological movements that aim to make a kind of equality between sexes as well as to eliminate discrimination of gender relations. Feminism combines the idea that women's position and rights in society are inferior to men therefore, efforts are given to discuss gender matters and to establish an educational and professional status equal to men .

Feminist linguistics discusses the interrelationship between language and gender, and it is politically significant to deal with the term feminism with the scope of language and gender studies. This can be done in order to change the perception and thinking of men and women use of language according to their representation in language structure. The political purpose of feminist linguistics is realized as a productive work that investigates the role of language (using vocabulary and phrases, to describe female features) in creating inequality of gender affairs with distinction against woman : gays, lesbian and transgendered people(Mills and Mullany,2011:5).

Most feminists engaged in a stance that women are patronized oppressively and differently from men, and they are subjected to personally and institutionally marginalization position of affairs. Also, feminists suppose that society is organized in such away for the benefit and sake of men It is a reflection of patriarchal attitude and cultural assumption of society. Feminist theory has adopted an analysis of the way that different forms and structures of oppression such as racism and homophobia are interacted as being concerned with forms of sexism and gender bias. Feminist hold a view of actual representation of men and women construction ; how certain views and notions are preferred and accepted at the expense of others. Most feminists still affirm that woman are systematically and consistently discriminated against as a group in various fields and ways. Feminism displays dedication to change the social attitude ,to change gender stereotypes to make it less oppressive to women .This

situation of change should instruct and acquaint a feminist analysis and teaching perspectives of gender representation in language and society(Mills,1995:3).

3. Feminist Stylistics

Feminist stylistics can be shown as a sub branch of stylistics dealing with the way where gender affairs are linguistically encoded in texts, and it attempts to employ some frameworks and models of stylistics. It aims to employ stylistic tools for the enquiry of those preoccupations and interests traditionally associated in feminist approaches to the study of language use. Feminist stylistics is concerned with the analysis of the effects of the questions and matters of gender on the production and interpretation of texts(Mills,2006:230).

Instead of supposing that notions of gender are a matter of discrimination messages about sex differences implemented in texts, feminist stylistics is related to the complex messages which may be inferred from the text and also with the reader's analysis and assumption to combine or oppose these messages . Feminist stylistics point of view is more interested in showing those values that exist in texts, whether they are prototypically patriarchal or not. Furthermore, its stances recognize that the binary considerations of gender are intensely as neither males nor females form a homogeneous or discrete group (Ibid).

Mills (2006:23) affirms that scholars of feminist perspective are able to continue on from a particular textual analysis completed at the micro level of language, to a more overall discourse level which will conduct the realization of linguistic structures such as direct or indirect speech with their indication to male and female characters, or the study of lexical concepts of collocation in connection to the main patterns of language with textual structures of males and females. The objective of feminist stylistics is performed in two parts: the first is related to the way text producer utilizes linguistic features which particularly project and represent male or female values. The second assumes the way readers attentively or inattentively identify particular gendered meanings. It is necessary to say that language and gender studies and linguistic feminism are essential in the construction of feminist stylistic work (Mills,2006:225).

Feminist stylistic analysis tries to deduct implicit sexism use of language in a text, to relate content and style of a text with gender matters. Feminist stylistics concentrates on both discourse and the way of

the style in which discourse is exposed. Mills affirms that in stylistic analysis context is essential besides other factors such as race ,class, and gender when dealing with the interpretation and production of a text. Also , the relationship between language, social structures and institutions awards feminist stylistics the opportunity to take on a political perspective against the ideological messages included in texts. Applying political position ,feminist stylistics tries to direct stylistics to adopt socio economic factors and practices in the analysis of language that can effect on language representation and to reach a possible interpretation of the text. In addition to that ,feminist stylistics attempts to make interaction between reader's perception and process of production with interpretation of different concepts and expectations as related to issues of gender (Mills,1995:11-17).

4. Sexism in Language

Sexism in language is a reflection of sexism in society. Language is sexist if it contributes or causes oppressive results or effects in the discrimination and affront of women. It is related to how language choices and usages influence our view and perception of the world, with reference to social construction. Feminists attempt to influence society and institution to formulate a policy of change towards sexism and to avoid use of sexist practices of language use towards women (Mills,1995:65).

The use of affixes can be a kind of sexism, and it is a deviation of the unmarked women from the marked normal men. There are many suffixes used to show a sense of insulting and trivializing to women' status for example, (ette, ette, ess, trix, enne) ,and "lady" .The expression "lady doctor" and "lady poet" refers to a sense of amateurism to the description of a person. These feminine gender nouns (hostess, poetess, authors, countess, actress, stewardess, aviatrix) with others show a kind of unseriousness, and inferiority especially in comparison with the male expression (aviator &aviatrix). In feminist analysis work, these derogatory notions should be avoided and compensated by other generic, polite and positive terms. In order to indicate whether the word is sexist ,it is necessary to apply it to

context in which it is used. Take the word "girl" it is not sexist when it is used to depict a female under 16 years old, but it shows sexist effect (often offensive) when it is used to refer to an old and mature female. To show the role of context in creating sexism,

take this sentence "we are going to join for a girls-night evening out". It is not problematic if it is said by woman, but it shows a sexist connotation if it is said by men who make fun and mirth of woman's evening (Ibid:75).

According to Frye(1981,P.19), sexism is an inquiry of attitude or ideology; its consequence effects rather than a matter of language structure uses, as sexists are those who grasp certain types of domination, beliefs ,actions , practices and specific rules as well as conventions which are reflected in specific different treatment and superiority of one sex but not the other. Braggin(1981,P.5) gives some examples to show how sexist language is quite complex topic to be tackled and exposed as in the following sentences:

- A) She is a foxy chick
- B) Woman makes horrible drives
- C) She is an attractive woman
- D) Some women drive badly

Both examples A and B shows a negative and degrading picture of women. The first sentence shows a kind of discrimination as it is represented as a source of sexual attractiveness, and desire; also by using metaphor the word "chick" to relate it to her human quality (often offensive).The second sentence shows that all women behave in the same way as it is a part of nature and behaviour of all women in general. Sentences C and D are less sexist as they are used with a particular individual female, even though the word 'attractive' and 'women' can be analyzed with different connotations with sexist usage and description as long as it is related to female representation(Mills,1995:77).

In English ,there are many terms and contrasting pairs of gender words which show a state of derogation ,negative and sexist specific connotation of meaning of female in contrast to the positive and superior position of the male as in the following pairs: (courtier & courtesan), (adventurer

&adventuress), (master & mistress) ,(host &hostess) , (bachelor & spinster), (sir & madam) , (lord &lady),(man &woman) , (priest & priestess) , and many others. The first binary term "courtier" and "courtesan" show different connotations the first male refers its meaning to someone who attended to court , but the second

female has a sense of sexual servant of a lower status or a prostitute (hooker). In the case of "adventurer and adventuress", the female word shows a sexual connotation (women who enjoy exciting new experience)."Master and mistress" present another contrast pairs in meaning, 'master' is associated with power and prestige, whereas the female word has a sexual and disreputable connotation meaning (being sweetheart and having romantic relationship).' Bachelor and spinster' reflect two different pictures, the first has a positive high independent position ,whereas the second female term implies an insulting meaning of an old maid who is too ugly ,sour and unlikely to find a husband (Ibid:87).

Sexism in language is a social and complicated subject matter , for it is related to human thought, attitude and culture institution. Therefore, feminists try to apply new less offensive gender terms and make through explanation to the meaning of the most sexist words in order to make change in their uses and to eliminate their effect and affront to female position.

5. Sexist Language use of Specific Expressions and Proverbs

Sexism can be clearly implied in phrases and proverbs particularly when they express sexist, demeaning and negative sense of meaning towards female position. Contextual features and ideological perspectives are necessary and needed to make feminist analysis to these phrases and proverbs. Take this phrase "a woman's work is never done". It can be a general sense of assumption and knowledge to have much work to be done ,so it is actual confusion and difficulty in her job and duty. Another proverb, "the way to man's heart is through his stomach". This statement can show different implied ideological assumptions and presuppositions. The relationship between women and men is essential especially for woman so she tries to intensify, and increase emotional response from a man by using many tricks to appeal him, one of these by cooking delicious food to seduce

his love and heart. Another sexist phrase towards women is "old wives tale" which indicates an old idea or belief that has been proved not to be scientific and not accepted by implied male assumption. Take this phrase "mutton dressed a lamb". It senses a metaphorical and ideological analysis as to describe a woman who is trying to look younger than she really is, especially by wearing clothes

that are designed for younger people (metaphor between the meat of old sheep 'mutton' and young sheep 'lamb' with the old and young woman's clothes). "trouble and strife" also refers negatively and implicitly towards women as the source of making troubles and problems in a large scale. In addition to these proverbs, there are many others which show the sexist sense of language use such as , 'scarlet women, . " a man is an old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks" , "men make houses, women make homes". (Mills,1995:99).

It should be seen that many feminists in their analysis of these phrases and statements try to reconstruct and reform them in such away to be less bias and less degrading to female status and description. Furthermore, they try create new proverbs with less sexism in its use and interpretation of meaning of language and with reduction of humorous effect in gender specification.

6. Transitivity: Characteristics and Choices

Transitivity is not only used to describe a grammatical relationship between the subject and object, but also to show how our experiences are represented and constructed through language. Internal and external experiences are represented by different types of processes of transitivity which is part of ideational functions of language (Wales.1989:466). In systematic functional grammar, Halliday (1994:221) affirms that transitivity is considered as a main notion employed to describe the ideational meaning which involves the experiential realization of the world, and is referred to by Halliday's thought as configuration of participants (nominal), process (verbs), and circumstances(adverbials). Halliday shows that these components of configuration is referred to as transitivity. The functional organization of transitivity patterns is based on semantic and grammatical principles of the encoded clauses, and the three essential processes

identified are (material, mental, relational).Material processes show a sense of doing action and have consequences in the material world : give, run, eat , for example, "he is swimming in the river". Mental processes refer to cognition, affection, perception and other activities in the mind: see, hate, know, for example, "she understood the novel". Relational processes can be expressed in some kind of relation of two groups or entities: have, become, appear, for example, "it is rather hot". Material processes are divided into two choices, the first is material intention action (it is a state of volition and tendency to do something deliberately), for example, 'he broke the window'. The second material choice is supervention action (it is a state of action that is not done intentionally, it is accidentally, for example, 'she broke her favored glasses' (Norgaard et al.,2010:164).These processes can be clearly illustrated in (Figure1).

Transitivity Processes

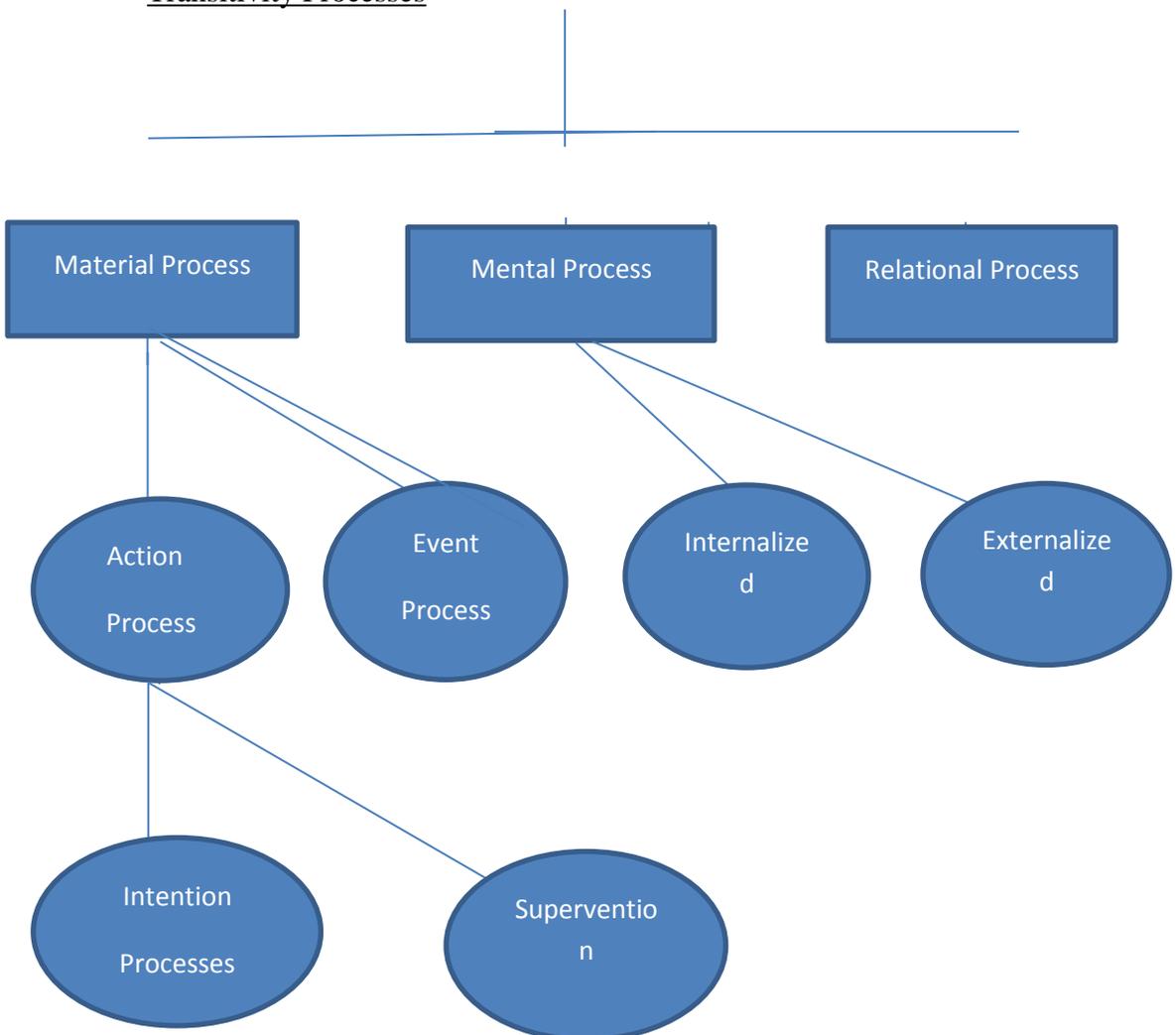


Figure (1) Schematic Types of Transitivity Processes (adopted from Mills,1995:112).

The work of transitivity is related to how actions are constructed and represented ,what kind of actions arise in a text, who does them and to whom they are done(actions are linguistically expressed by different types of verbs and their activity in the text) . Choices between various kinds of processes(external awareness of the reader and his internal world of consciousness), and different participants and their different roles are made clearly through transitivity choices. This effective linguistic analysis of choices in a text is related to human's participants roles. Therefore, a wide distinction is formed to distinguish conscious actors who are able to perceive thought, and planned actions from unconscious thought and planned actions of everything in the world. In the analysis of transitivity in any text, a special consideration is given to the number of choices of types of process. Therefore, the description and production of a text in which the author uses mental process will be different from material process in many perspectives and tendencies. Halliday (1971,250) states that analysis and use of specific patterns of transitivity choice in literary text can be helpful to the readers' understanding and also to reveal a general statement about the characters view as well as experience of the world, with their actions, and relations with the others in the world of the text (Mills,1995:112).

Burton (1982:202) employs the concept of transitivity as a model to show how experiential meaning is encoded and represented in different choices of processes. She analyzes a section from a novel entitled *The Bell Jar* , in which the protagonist female is prepared to attend an electric shock treatment to cure her mental problems. The analysis of the disabling structure of the clause shows that the narrator position is a passive victim and other staff of the hospital have control and activity to their surroundings. Here, transitivity is used to explore how female protagonist who is a victim controlled by her environment is disabled by structure choices of the text. Burton compares the passiveness of the female with other characters who are in more control of them, and activity of their environmental situation is reflecting a material –intention action process. Finally, it is significant to say that analysis of transitivity processes is

beneficial since it shows how the character's behavior is reflected and produced through a particular linguistic choice of language (Ibid).

7. Transitivity as an Ideational Function of Language at Work: a Feminist Stylistic Approach

In this section, a feminist stylistic analysis of transitivity model described by Halliday (1971) and adopted by Burton(1982),and Mills(1995) will be applied and discussed in the selected romance scene below extracted from Barbara Taylor Bradford's novel entitled "A Woman of Substance'. Transitivity choices, how actions of different types of process, different participants and their roles will be shown by characters' situation and behaviour in the scene. Furthermore, a distinction is made between gender differences /relations and actions to show whether they are conscious active or unconscious passive and whether they are controlled by their environment or not. Types of processes (material, mental and relational) will be explicated in the text. For example, "they built their house": its type is material as related to physical action and the first part 'person or object' is called the agent that does the action , the last part 'person or object' is called the effected entity 'the house', and the verb phrase is the action of the verb and its classifications which decide the kind of activity (process).

Romance scenes and encounters are rich of transitivity presentation and analysis. In heterosexual romance scene, transitivity choices backed and helped gender relations of romance style, show that the male protagonist will be the agent in material action-intention process who is much more effective than the female protagonist who is more likely to be the actor in mental or material event processes and seems to be physically passive and out of control of her actions. Below is a description of a romantic and love scene between Emma Harte and her new beloved as sweetheart relation. She was a kitchen maid who quickly developed her career to be successful hardworking woman. Although she achieves good financial and profitable success in her work, she doesn't have constant successful heterosexual and domestic relation in her family life (Mills.1995:114).

'Take your robe off, my love', he said softly as he came towards her. He covered her body with his own and cradled her with his arms smiling down into her expectant face. 'It's such a pity to ruin this exotic hairdo', he murmured as he began to pull the pins from her hair. The russet tresses spilled around her shoulders, porcelain fragile and pink in the warm glow of the lamp, and he gasped at her loveliness now so perfectly revealed to him. He ran his hand through the heavy lengths and held her by the nape of her neck, bringing her face up to his own. His lips met hers, savouring their warmth and sweetness, and they were both engulfed by their longing and the emotions which had been denied release for weeks. He moved his mouth into the hollow of her neck, kissing her shoulders, her breasts and the deep valley between, and his strong hands smoothed over her firm skin and he caressed every part of her until he knew her fervour matched his own. Emma was suffused by unfamiliar warmth, a burning heat that flooded her whole being. Her whole body arched up, cleaved to him. She ached to be joined to him, to become one with him, and she marveled at her pleasure in his body and in her own (Taylor Bradford,1981:666).

To make a comparison between the number of the processes and their actors of the male and female actions, the results will be like the following:

The male or male body part as actor:

- 1) he said = mental internalized process
- 2) he came towards her = material-action- intention
- 3) he covered her body = material –action-intention
- 4) he cradled her = material-action-intention
- 5) he murmured = mental externalized process
- 6) he began to pull = material – action - intention
- 7) he grasped = mental externalized process
- 8) he ran his hand through her hair = material –action - intention
- 9) he held her = material – action - intention
- 10) his lips met hers (body part as actor) = material – action –supervention
- 11) he moved his mouth = material – action – intention
- 12) his hands smoothed over her skin(body part as actor) = material event

13) he caressed her = material – action – intention

14) he knew = mental internalized process

The female or female body part as actor :

15) her hair spilled 9 body part as actor) = material – action – supervision

16) Emma was suffused = relational process

17) her whole body arched (body part as actor) = material – supervision

18) she ached = mental internalized process

19) she marveled = mental – internalized process

This extract shows that emotions of romantic love are expressed by using transitivity choices of the verbs and clauses. The male appears to be the agent active participant actor, whereas the female takes the role of being affected or recipient participant actor. In the scene above a comparison is made between the representation of male and female character in connection of "who does what to whom". The whole number of processes are nineteen, the female does five processes in her role as an actor, whereas male shows fourteen which are the highest number in their performance. The processes accomplished by female are different in quality from those accomplished by male. The male actor does ten material intention processes that means he is the central protagonist agent who is in control of his actions (look at the verbs of action) and affected activities of female body parts). The female does two material supervision process, that means her action is not agent and sure and free of her control (her hair spill, her body arches). The other three of her processes show that two of them are mental and one is relational that reflects her passivity in her quality, and in what she thinks and feels. Transitivity choices shows that female as a recipient of the action mostly done by the male. Male experience is adopted by his active actions he does to her body, and female experience is realized by her feeling, inner thought and her reliable response to her physical pleasure (Wareing, 1994: 163).

In feminist analysis interpretation of transitivity, ideology can affect romantic love and emotional representation of women's lives in the sense

that she is naturally passive and acted upon and represented as recipient of love. Another feminist interpretation adopts the notion that woman is a victim of male seduction where she is turned to be passive by the actions of the male who seems powerful agent whereas the female is powerless agent. And this is clear in the use of transitivity choices of material intention actions of the male's seductive and descriptive language of his behaviour ,but at the same time this passivity turned her to live in a situation of happiness and to show a kind of pleasure and ecstasy in her reaction and adopting of the romantic ideology of love. In this regard, feminist analysis of the text tries to apply and construct a new picture of woman's representation by using transitivity choices in interpretation of the meaning. Her passivity is not to be a source of disruption and disturbance of her own life and position, but instead to be a kind of pleasure and to reflect happy side of her own natural personality and position. Finally, it is seen that readers' assumptions and inferences and the contextual factors of the text can play an essential role in the process of interpretation (Mills,1995:120).

8. Conclusions

Feminist stylistics as a branch of stylistics tries to create a counter- image of a woman in language use and society; this is to raise awareness and change ways that gender relations and affairs are represented and tackled in the linguistic analysis of language production and performance. In addition, the study has shown that transitivity patterns are used as a device to analyze gender representation and to describe the ideational meaning which involves the experiential realization of the world. The results of the analysis of transitivity choices of the selected romantic scene have shown that the whole number of processes are- nineteen: the female does five processes in her role as an actor, whereas male shows fourteen which are the highest number in their performance. The male appears to be the active participant agent who is conscious and in control of his action, whereas the female appears to be passive in her quality, out of volition and being affected or recipient actor. Also, it is seen that feminist analysis tries to create a new message and picture of woman position; this is depicted by the essential role of the readers' assumption and contextual factors of the text in the process of interpretation.

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دراسة تحليلية اسلوبية نسوية للقضايا اللغوية الخاصة بتمثيل التجنيس في نص ادبي مختار

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جامعة الكوفة - كلية الآداب - قسم اللغة الانكليزية

خلاصة البحث

الاسلوبية هي تحليل لغة النصوص الادبية المتكاملة للمناهج المختلفة لا نشاء اطار من الوسائل المتباينة التي تصف عملا معيناً وتفسره ، ان الاسلوبية النسوية التي تعتمد على نظريات النقد النسوي تحاول ان تقدم صورة مختلفة للمرأة في كل من استعمال اللغة والمجتمع، ولفت الانتباه ورفع الوعي وتغيير طرق تمثيل التجنيس. لا يرتبط تحليل الاسلوب النسوي بوصف التميز الجنسي في النص فقط وانما ايضا بتحليل الطريقة التي ترتبط بها وجهات النظر والاستعارات والخيارات الانتقالية للفعل المتعدي بعناية فائقة بقضايا التجنيس. تحاول الدراسة مناقشة مسائل تمثيل التجنيس في التحليل الاسلوبي وكيف يتم استنتاج الاسئلة والخطابات المتعلقة بالتجنيس عند عرض النص وتفسيره. وعلاوة على ذلك ، لتحليل ودراسة مفهوم الانتقالية للفعل المتعدي وكيف يتم اختيار المعنى في الانماط الانتقالية المختلفة للفعل المتعدي.

لقد اظهرت الدراسة ان الانماط الانتقالية للفعل المتعدي تستعمل كأداة لتحليل تمثيل التجنيس ووصف المعنى الفكري الذي يتضمن الادراك التجريبي للعالم. اظهرت نتائج تحليل خيارات الانتقالية للفعل المتعدي للمشهد الرومانسي المختار ، ان العدد الاجمالي للعمليات هو تسعة عشر، تقوم الانثى بخمسة عمليات في دورها، بينما يظهر الذكر اربعة عشر وهي اعلى رقم في أدائه. ويبدو ان الذكر هو العامل المشارك الفعال الذي يدرك ويسيطر على تصرفاته ، في حين ان الانثى تبدو سلبية في ميزتها وارادتها ومتأثرة في دورها. كما يرى ان التحليل النسوي يجاول انشاء صورة وموقف جديد لمكانة المرأة ، ويتضح ذلك من الدور الاساسي لمعرفة القراءة وعوامل سياق النص في عملية التفسير.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: اسلوبية النسوية، التجنيس، التميز الجنسي، خيارات الانتقالية