



Woman in Culture and Arts

The Sociological Representation of Women's Interactions in Mohammad Hejazi's Novels (Homa, Ziba, and Parichehr) Based on the Approach of Kress and Van Leeuwen

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 23 August 2023 Received in revised form: 12 February 2024 Accepted: 8 January 2025 Published online: 1 July 2025</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Female Interactions, Hejazi's Novels, Keres and Van Leeuwen, Representation of Women Trilogiy.</i></p>	<p>Introduction Women, who constitute a major demographic segment of society, have encountered a multitude of unresolved issues and challenges as a result of their unique social, economic, cultural, and gender circumstances. These challenges have been further exacerbated by the presence of social taboos that influence the immediate environment and living space of women, particularly in the areas of interactions and relationships. The reality of women's relationships is characterized by obstacles, biases, and widespread ignorance, despite the desire for women to actively participate alongside men and other groups in society, taking on active roles in interactions and positions of power. Oversimplification, incomplete comprehension, and the normalization of cultural representations that reflect male dominance and female subordination have resulted in both women and men perceiving women's relationships as devoid of any issues in the domain of perception (Mertent, 1997: 23). The traces of these perceptions and mental constructs can be analyzed in cultural artifacts and legacies such as proverbs, textbooks, films, magazines, and popular novels from different eras. As a result, this investigation investigates the relationships and interactions between women in the popular novels of the Pahlavi I era (Homa, Ziba, Parichehr), which are significant in the context of gender-related policies and women's issues in the contemporary history of Iran. The principal research questions for this study are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) In Mohammad Hejazi's novels, how are women's relationships and interactions depicted? 2) What is the extent of women's agency in social interactions, whether it be active or inert, and in which contexts do they engage more frequently? 3) Are the narrative subjects objects that are acted upon, or do the women interact with them? <p>Methodology Our analysis concentrates on the portrayal of women in specific novels, as a result of the critical approach devised by Kress and van Leeuwen, which offers a theoretical framework and method for analyzing multimodal texts (Jorgensen And Phillips, 2018: 111). Initially, we conducted a thorough examination of the three novels that were selected in order to develop a more profound comprehension, extracting and analyzing thematic motifs. Subsequently, we conducted a comparative analysis of the motifs in the works, which resulted in the identification of initial common patterns.</p> <p>We categorized the data by utilizing the interactive, representational, and compositional functions proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen. Our objective is to ascertain the portrayal of female characters as outsiders, marginalized individuals, or socially active participants, while also examining their interactions and social distance. We investigate whether women interact with story objects or are merely subjected to actions. Regarding textual representation, we prioritize the information concerning women's interactions and identify the emphasized dimensions of female communication. Within the constructed textual framework, we analyze whether female subjects occupy subordinate or dominant communicative positions.</p> <p>Furthermore, our research incorporates the adaptation and utilization of previous studies. The evaluation methodology in this study is based on two critical criteria: "coherence," which denotes the alignment of various research elements, and "utility," which assesses the capacity to produce scientific explanations of the phenomenon being investigated. According to Wodak and Meyer (2001), these criteria hold significant importance when assessing credibility in discourse analysis.</p> <p>Results The interactions among women in the story can be classified into two groups: "within the same</p>

gender" and "between genders" based on the concept of representational validity. The conflicts within the same gender reveal how women are perceived, taking into account factors such as literacy, physical appearance, internal or external attributes, level of activity, their role as subjects or objects, urban or rural backgrounds, social status as noble or prostitute, and their wealth or poverty. The nature of a woman's relationships is influenced by the category in which she falls. Additionally, the portrayal of women in Hejazi's novels suggests that they are not confined solely to the domestic sphere but actively engage in diverse relationships outside the home and explore different locations.

Hejazi's trilogy portrays a change in the portrayal of relationships and the relative autonomy of women, as viewed through the prism of representational validity. Although the nature of these interactions has been influenced by the circumstances of the era, they have been instrumental, with acquaintances, and in public places (such as offices, streets, and religious ceremonies). Their social relationships are classified as intimate/non-intimate, formal/informal, equal/unequal, weak/strong, and having or not having, upper hand/lower hand participations, despite the fact that their range of relationships is not entirely open; they have entered into extrafamilial relationships. Collectively, these dimensions demonstrate a "gendered distribution of resources and power," in which the extent to which women reap social advantages influences their level of power in interactions and relationship-building. Ascribed characteristics, such as attractiveness, and their acquired attributes, such as education and urban or rural backgrounds greatly impact the level of oppression experienced by women in these interactions. The interactive representation pattern also implies that women are not entirely marginalized or excluded in Hejazi's novels. Nevertheless, their social engagement is still in its infancy, occurring within the realm of male dominance that continues to exercise substantial influence.

Conclusion

This analysis does not reveal any overarching pattern in the interactions between women in the texts. Instead, there are diverse communication patterns influenced by their specific circumstances and roles. In general, Hejazi's narratives depict women who surpass conventional discourses in their pursuit of greater self-expression and empowerment. The dominant discourses present in the texts, encompassing politics, society, and religion, all intertwined with power dynamics, have played a significant role in shaping women's interactions and relationships. A recurring theme in Hejazi's literary works is the ongoing challenge to traditional discourses and religious doctrines.

The female characters in Hejazi's stories are not passive individuals who passively endure events; rather, they actively respond based on their circumstances. Michel de Certeau posits that these women employ tactics of resistance and resilience. Hejazi's novels encompass two contrasting discourses: the traditional discourse, which primarily confines women to domestic settings and familial relationships, and the discourse of renewal, which encourages women to engage in social and formal non-family environments. These discourses occasionally clash, resulting in "discursive conflicts" that demonstrate a balanced intellectual dialogue.

Hejazi promotes the reevaluation and reestablishment of women's identity and femininity by constructing empowered female characters who possess education, attractiveness, and fashion sense. This aligns with the political, economic, and social transformations that are currently taking place in modern Iran. As a result, it is imperative to critically reevaluate the representation of women that is founded on stereotypical, diminished, and dependent images. In order to shift away from trite, feeble, and submissive depictions of women in the realm of communication, cultural mediums such as textbooks, magazines, novels, and particularly popular films and TV series should make significant strides in presenting women as strong and capable individuals in their relationships and interactions.

Conflict of Interest

This article is devoid of any conflicts of interest.

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