



Women, Their Character, Outlooks and Wishes in the Novel

Manizheh Abdohahi and Ehya Amalsaleh

Paramedical School, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 10 January 2015;

Received in revised form:

25 February 2015;

Accepted: 5 March 2015;

Keywords

Generation,
Outlook,
Wish,
Home,
Identity,
Women.

ABSTRACT

Novels, in contemporary literature, have given us a new perspective. This is, especially, due to the presence of female writers using new story writing and narrative techniques in creating the settings. Among these is the novel under study, written by an Iranian novelist, which tends to introduce and present Iranian women's problems and challenges. This study is, in effect, carried out on a Persian contemporary novel entitled *Adat Mikonim* (We'll Get Used to It), written by Zoya Pirzad. The main character of the story is a middle-aged woman from a middle class family who is living with her daughter as well as her mother. The novel depicts the obstacles the woman faces communicating with as well as being understood by her daughter and mother. Following Hodge and Kress' (1993), the present study is carried out within the Critical Discourse framework to analyze the text. The book contains 31 chapters, out of which the first 16 chapters were selected. The texts were analyzed with regard to the following properties: grammar (regarding two properties: syntagmatic models and transformations), and vocabulary (i.e., adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, with their ideological significance). The study is an attempt to depict linguistically the identity, wishes and outlooks of three women belonging to three generations, their similarities as well as differences.

© 2015 Elixir All rights reserved.

Introduction

The Present Study

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) views language a crucial vehicle for disseminating certain viewpoints, or ideology. Language, in addition, is believed (van Dijk 2001; Hodge & Kress, 1993) to form behavior, as well as the way we feel and think. It is also seen as an instrument capable of shaping our ideology. It seems, therefore, necessary to see what language can do in defining people and their status in a community. CDA, generally speaking, (Anastasia, S. and Stephanos Paraskevopoulos, 2004:107) attempts to synthesize linguistic and social approaches of discourse analysis.

It is common sense among the proponents of CDA (Hodge & Kress, 1993, and van Dijk, 1988, among others) that no text is innocent; that is, all texts contribute to disseminating certain ideology. That is to say, language used in a text, in fact, makes the reader/listener interpret the text in certain ways. Hence, language is involved in carrying out ideological work. The content of ideology, then, is realized through linguistic forms the speaker/writer selects amongst different forms they have at their disposal (Kress, 1985). Thus, one way, commonly practiced, is to analyze the linguistic forms of a text in order to explore its underlying ideology. One of the main issues pertaining to the "syntagmatic model", introduced by Hodge & Kress (1993), is to detect the ideology disseminated throughout the text. Kress (1985) asserts that events may be presented in two ways: either in the transactive form, accounting for the agent(s) of the action and its impact upon the goal (affected), or in the nontransactive form, presenting the action without specifying the doer or agent of the event. That is, since there is only one entity, it is difficult to know whether it is the actor or affected (p.8). Then, how the event is presented can be indicative of the ideology of the speaker/writer. Novels, compared with other literary genres, are relatively recent; nevertheless, they are of crucial importance in

representing people, their identity, culture, desire, and the like. They tend to present people in their real complexities of life. They present people we ordinarily see around with their desires and motives. Novels, then, with their representational power, can depict a vivid picture of the society at a particular period of time. Hence, it is a valuable object of study to realize how different group of people, young or old, poor or rich, etc. express themselves. People, though living in the same country and apparently use the same language, make different lexical selection or even different grammatical structure to talk about the same issue. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the novel *Adat Mikonim* (We'll Get Used to It), focusing linguistically on the representation of three female characters. It is to see how these characters view the world through the discursive strategies they use. To do this, in addition to the analysis of the linguistic structures the characters use, the vocabularies they employ are studied. Among all vocabularies used, three words and two concepts seem to have key roles in depicting their identity, wishes and outlook: home, clothes, food, on the one hand and dependency and friendship, on the other. The study, hence, aims at finding answers to the following questions:

1. How are the actions performed by these three characters linguistically?
2. What traits and features are attributed to each character?
3. What words are used by them and do the words mean differently to these three characters?

Methodology

Corpus and procedure

Following Hodge and Kress' (1993), the present study has analyzed the novel, "*Adat Mikonim*" (We'll Get Used to It), within the Critical Discourse framework. The data consist of interactions among three main female characters of the novel. They belong to different generations; Aye, the granddaughter,

was born after the Islamic revolution; Arezoo, the middle-aged woman, was born before the revolution; She is divorced; and takes care of her daughter, Aye, as well as her mother, Mahmonir. Mahmonir was born during the Pahlavi era, but mentally belongs to the Ghajar dynasty. The book contains 31 chapters, out of which 16 chapters were selected. The texts were analyzed with regard to the following properties: lexicogrammar, and vocabulary (i.e., adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and voice, along with their ideological significance). Language, in this approach, is viewed as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995). Hence, the study, within the framework of CDA, examines the language used by these three characters in reflecting as well as constructing social reality. More specifically, the study is an attempt to depict linguistically the wishes and outlooks of three women belonging to three generations, their similarities as well as differences.

Theoretical Framework

It is necessary to maintain that, due to its specific nature, the study is mainly a qualitative research and, hence, our options in carrying out quantitative computations are considerably limited. Nonetheless, having produced richly detailed accounts of social actors represented in the text under study, attempts will be made to carry out a statistical analysis to find the significance of differences, if any, among the proportions of social actors falling into different categories, such as actionals (transactive vs. non-transactive) and relationals, comprising equative and attributive. They comprise the “syntagmatic model”, introduced by Hodge and Kress (1993). By actionals, they mean that there is a doer who does something which may have some impacts on the affected, if there is any. Concerning relational, two types of relation are identified. If the writer tends to set up a relation between two nouns, then an equative relation is established, whereas in that of attributive the writer presents a relation between a noun and adjective, or qualities.

The second component of the syntagmatic model or relationals, according to Hodge and Kress (1993), tend to provide the reader with sorts of classification and judgments of outside reality. Most relationals, according to these writers, “signal an intense activity of reclassifying an underdeveloped, problematic but largely uncontested model of reality, reproducing it for ideological purposes.” (Hodge & Kress, 1993:164). The act of classification, in general, is very successful in shaping a polar world, dividing the world between ‘us’ and ‘them’, proposing positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, the point which is at issue with most scholars active in CDA (Fairclough, 1989 & 1995; van Dijk, 2001; van Leeuwen, 1996). In this concern, Sykes (1985: 87) defines ideology and its effect as: Ideologies are sets of ideas or theories about the nature of the world and how it works. They provide explanations for why things are as they are by defining the participants and processes in the social world and the relationships between them, as well as the criteria by which the latter may be evaluated and the means by which they may be changed. Ideologies, therefore, provide explanatory theories and guides to action: They enable us to make sense of the world, to evaluate it, and to act meaningfully in it. The One-Variable Chi-Square is run to find out what proportions of doers are significantly involved in transactive/non-transactive, and equative / attributive types of clauses. The textual material has been coded and classified manually. Words or phrases are classified under the category they most clearly belong.

Data Analysis and results

In analyzing the novel under the rubric of CDA, the study tends to find the way different main female characters are

represented linguistically. More specifically, it is to display, for instance, what role each character, representing a different generation, takes. As it is emphasized by the proponents of CDA, the allocation of roles to certain agent is by no means accidental; rather it follows and attempts to sustain a particular kind of ideology. Hence, the book, to the extent it represents each generation in certain ways, can reveal the underlying determining ideologies at work.

The texts are analyzed more specifically with regard to the following criteria, namely, verbals, relationals and passive/active actors/actions as well as certain key vocabularies. That is to say, since each character is a representative of a different generation, it is to investigate if the proportion of using the above properties would differ with regards to different generations.

But before exhibiting the results, the following examples, taken from the novel may help:

1. Transactive: I took note of the percentage./ I took her to the university.
2. Non-transactive: I went to the accountant./ I just arrived.
3. Relational Equivalent : Are you an architect? She is my friend.
4. Relational Attribute: Aye is a child./ She is spoiled.

To understand the above examples, they are illustrated as follows:

Material Process (Transactive)

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| I | took | her |
| | to the university | |
| Actor | Process : Material | goal |
| | circumstance | |
| Nominal group | verbal group | Nominal group |
| | Adverbial group | |

Material Process (non-Transactive)

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| I | went | to the accountant |
| Actor | Process : Material | circumstance |
| Nominal group | verbal group | Adverbial group/ prepositional group |

Relational Process of intensive attribution

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------|--|
| You | have become | |
| noble! | | |
| Carrier | Process: Relational | |
| Attribute | | |
| Nominal group | verbal group | |
| Adjective | | |

Relational Process of Equative

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------|----|
| He | is | an |
| architect. | | |
| Token | Process: Relational | |
| value | | |
| Nominal group | | |

Relational Process of Attributive

| | | |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------|
| She | is | spoiled |
| Token | Process: Relational | value |
| | | Adjective/quality |

The following tables (1&2) are used to answer the first question, that is, what actions are attributed to and performed by which generation.

According to table 1, Arezoo, the middle-aged woman, using the highest percentage of transactives (26.6%), is presented as one who has some effects on her surrounding , while the two other generations, the young and old ones, have rarely used transactive verbs (5% & 9%, respectively). In this regard, they correlate with each other better than with Arezoo. Concerning the percentage of using non-transactives, the latter group, Aye and Mahmonir, exceeds the former. This also

displays the active role taken by Arezoo, compared to the two others. This finding is further supported by the role allocated to these characters and agency taken by each (Table 2, below).

Concerning the relational, again where there is going to be some attributes assigned to people, things, etc., almost equal numbers are used by Arezoo and her daughter, but the grandmother, the oldest generation, has a greater tendency toward using attributive adjectives. Mahmonir, who claims to be a descendant of Ghajar dynasty, with her class-oriented mentality, tends to make judgments over people.

Under equatives, in which two entities are related to a verb and not showing any action, the youngest generation, Aye, shows more tendency than the other two. She seems not to be very much interested in judging others, but defining and classifying them.

The result of Chi-Square shows that the differences mentioned among these three generations are statistically significant. The following figure illustrates the points mentioned above.

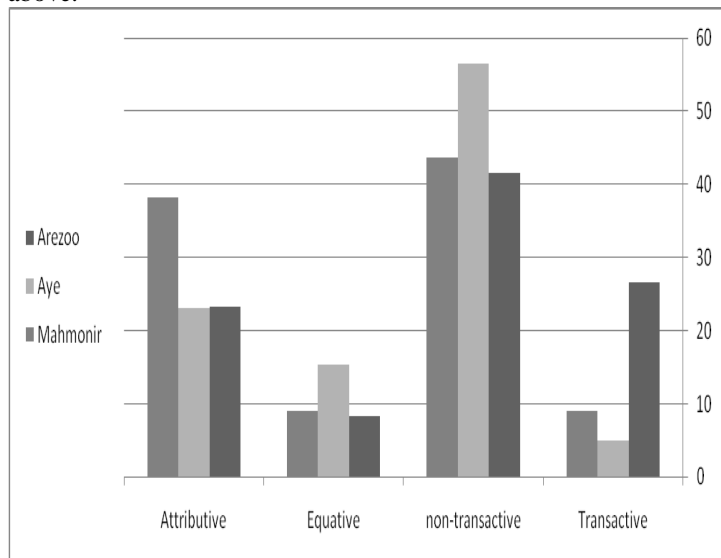


Figure 1. The Percentage of Verbals and relational used by Each Character

The following table displays the relationship between the representation of the three characters with the role ascribed to them; it shows if they are mostly represented as the doer of the action or the affected. The following examples are related to the roles taken by the characters:

1. I got the key (Active role)
2. I am not invited to the party.(Passive role)

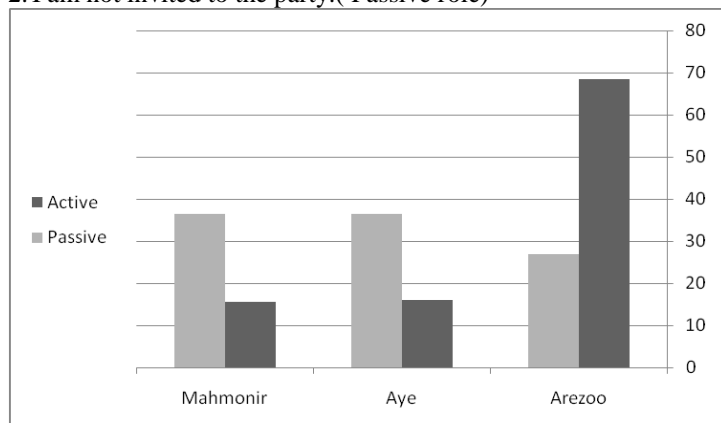


Figure 2. The role ascribed to each generation

With regard to the frequency of taking passive or active roles, as table 2 shows, there seems to be greater similarities between the oldest and the youngest generation, one belonging

to the period before the revolution and the other after. Coupled with the findings of the actionals and relational employed by these three characters, the youngest and oldest generations seem to be reluctant assuming more responsibility and taking active roles. They prefer to use non-transactives and/ or passive structures.

The result of Chi-Square analysis showed a significant difference in the roles assigned to them.

In addition to the grammar, vocabulary also plays an important role in representing social actors. The words one selects to use denote the perspectives, he/she takes with regard to the topic of discussion. In this regard, Khosravi (2010) asserts that 'perspectivizing' a person or an event displays the person's outlook toward the world. Van Dijk (2004) also maintains that "... lexical choice and other aspects of 'appraisal' is rooted in the ways evaluative beliefs are represented in their mental models of events."

Concerning the effects of vocabulary, Bahktin (1981), asserts that words, depending upon the context of situation and the participants, can denote different meanings. People convey their attitude through words. Words not only represent People's personal dimension, but also the social and/ or historical dimension. Accordingly, the words the characters use and the way they approach them can signify their outlook and personality. In this novel, for instance, the following words, 'home', 'food', 'clothes' as well as the concepts of dependency and friendship are viewed differently by these characters.

Before discussing the words, it seems relevant to introduce the characters and their attitudes. Arezoo, the central character of the novel, is a middle- aged woman. She was born and brought up before the Islamic revolution. She is a single parent at the moment. Her ex-husband, who is her cousin as well, lives in France. Following her father's death, she re-opens his real estate agency, a job mostly dominated by men. She wears ordinary clothes. She has been brought up before the revolution and has started working after the revolution. She loves her country and cultural issues. This love is noticeable in the song, food, house design, etc, she is interested in. Her intimate friend, Shirin, and her boy friend, belonging to the same generation as Arezoo, both show interest to the same issues: country, and its culture. This may make Arezoo a representative of the people belonging to her age group. Her goal is to save the cultural values. Her desire is to help the needy people as well as her daughter and mother. respectively. This labeling denotes the social gap she feels between her and them.

Arezoo calls her it seems that theydaughter and mother , 'modarbozorg' (grandmother) and 'nave'(granddaughter),share more commonalities with each other than with Arezoo. One of her troubles is witnessing the deterioration of humanistic values, not only in the society but also in her daughter, mother.

Mahmonir, the grandmother, belongs to the era before the 1979 revolution. She claims to be a descendant of Qajar dynasty. She openly boasted her ancestors who belong to the ruling class. Her appearance, including clothes, jewelry, food, etc. bear witness to that. Though, at the moment, she is no longer living under the sovereignty of Shah, her mindset, her performance, still belongs to that period. Her desire is to be the center of attention and be respected by others, especially by men. That's why she holds parties and invites friends, relatives (old friends and relatives). She has actually turned her back to the time after the revolution. She doesn't seem to be eager to change anything; hence, almost the same guests, that she used to invite before the revolution, are invited to the parties held at home.

Table 1. The Cross tabulation of Actions Attributed to the Three Generations

| Characters | Verb | | | | Total |
|------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|-------|
| | transactive | Non-transactive | Equative | Attributive | |
| Arezoo | 80 (26.6%) | 125 (41.6%) | 25 (8.3%) | 70 (23.3%) | 300 |
| Aye | 4 (5%) | 44 (56.5%) | 12 (15.3%) | 18 (23%) | 78 |
| Mahmonir | 10 (9%) | 49(43.7%) | 10 (9%) | 43(38.3%) | 112 |
| Total | 94 (19.2%) | 218 (44.5%) | 47 (9.6%) | 131(26.7%) | 490 |

Table 2. The roles ascribed to each generations (%)

| | Arezoo | Aye | Mahmonir |
|--------------|--------|------|----------|
| Active role | 68.5 | 16 | 15.5 |
| Passive role | 27 | 36.5 | 36.5 |

Table 3. Outlooks of the characters

| | Home | Clothes | Food | Dependency | Friendship |
|----------|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| Arezoo | Old houses; traditional one; a place for being relaxed | Meet the need | Traditional and Modern | Strives to be Independent | Trusted, |
| Mahmonir | Big and Luxurious houses; A place for accepting guests; holding parties | Expensive & famous brand | Expensive & Good looking | Dependent, likes to be taken care of, by husband, daughter, maids, male neighbors | Of high-class family, rich, respecting her authority and woman hood |
| Aye | Doesn't care; not a good place for having fun; carves to go out to have a happier life; | Expensive & Modern ones; famous brand | Fast food | Dependent, be supported financially by mother, emotionally by grandmother, father, mother's friend | Virtual, classless approach |

Her lifelong passion for luxury is noticeable. She enjoys the luxury of expensive items with which she decorated her house. She is highly class-oriented and refrains from communicating with people from lower social class. She always looks down upon her daughter, Arezoo, since she is not interested in luxuries and wears very ordinary clothes; her desire is to be protected; she used to be supported by her husband and now she expects the same support from her daughter.

Aye, the young daughter, is rather modern. She was born after the revolution and is brought up in the post-revolutionary era. Her main concern is attending parties. This entails buying new, modern and expensive clothes, for the wedding, parties or even skis. She is a university student but she hates studying. That's why she always nags her mother and others about the university and professors. Unlike her grandmother, she doesn't care about the social class and easily makes friends even with the boy who is a low-class worker in her mother's real estate agency. She wears the same brand of jeans he wears. This shows how the new generation are interested in brands and hence Aye may act as the representative of her generation. She owns a web-log through which she communicates her feeling with those whom she has never seen. Her goal is to enjoy the best of everything. Her desire is to be free. She does not accept any responsibility in life.

As the central character of the novel, Arezoo, owns a real estate agency, the main topic of discussion in this book is 'home'. Home is viewed differently by these three characters (Table 3); The concept 'home', at the same time that is a real concrete home, symbolizes the country. Viewing from this angle, Arezoo, makes fun of the home / country, her mother lives in. She calls her mothers' house, Versailles Palace and her daughter, Marie-Antoinette. She, Aye, in most cases, seems to better deserve to be the descendents of grandmother than Arezoo. This shows that, concerning the mindset and worldview,

these two generations better come along with each other than with Arezoo.

concerning 'home', it is, to Mahmonir, is a big, spacious and luxurious place in which parties are celebrated and guests are received. Mentally, she still lives in a pre-revolution era, being a class-oriented person with maids at her service. Mahmonir lives in the 'royal palace' and nobody can force her to leave.

The word 'home' to Arezoo, is an old sort of traditional house in which one can be relax. She is keen at preserving old values of her home/ country; she never thinks of leaving her country. She is so worried of modern apartments displacing older houses, older values. She takes old houses as the representation of Iranian's moral and cultural values. That's why she gets happy when Zarjoo, one of her customer, who later became her boy friend, decides to buy the old house. In this way, he will preserve the house-- the old values.

Aye, however, doesn't care about home. In order to have fun and enjoy herself, she always goes out of home. She participates in parties held out. If one takes 'home' symbolizing the country, she desires to leave the country in order to have a better life. She envies her friends who have left the country (Pirzad,1999, p.19). She intends to go to Paris, where her father lives.

Regarding Clothes, the grandmother and granddaughter share the same view; both love expensive clothes having a brand name design. Though the brand name grandmother is after differs from that Aye favors, both prefers wearing clothes belonging to a famous brand. Aye doesn't wear last year's because it is old. she likes new, modern and European-style clothes. Arezoo, however, prefers a cloth which meets her needs. That's why , the two other, look down upon her. Aye calls her mother's preference for clothes, music, etc, 'Javad', a masculine name which now means old-fashion.

The food grandmother likes is one which is good-looking and luxurious; she buys sweet from a special confectionary; Aye, on the other hand, loves fast food. She loves Hamburger and French fried potato, baguette, jambon, cheese, and chewing gum. With regard to food, Arezoo, stands somewhere in between; she likes both traditional and modern food. She loves both lamb liver, popular in Iran and fried potatoes, symbolizing the modern world. What is interesting is that when she suggests eating fast food, she turns to the language and words Aye usually uses.

Concerning dependency, grandmother and granddaughter have a dependent personality; Mahmonir was taken care of by her husband and later by her daughter. Aye, financially, is dependent upon her mother, but socially she likes to be free and doesn't observe her mother's expectations and wishes. When Mahmonir was young, her husband used to buy her luxurious birthday gifts (Jewelry and Rolex watch); now it is her daughter who buys her presents; Aye receives gifts from her father, mother and grandmother. Arezoo, however, buys herself birthday gifts. Arezoo, unlike Mahmonir, likes to be independent; to do that, she has entered a male-dominated job with a number of personnel working under her supervision. Socially, she is in a managerial position, but at home, she is at the service of her mother and daughter. They are in authoritative positions (Pirzad, 1999, p.53) and expect her to follow their orders. Both Aye and Mahmonir nag (ghor zadan) and both expect Arezoo to be at their service. They express this with their own 'codes of behavior: Mahmonir 'sticks to the framework of the past, ordering Arezoo to serve her; Aye follows the framework in line with the modern world, with no particular border.

The concept of friendship, like others, denotes different outlooks of these three characters; Mahmonir chooses friends belonging to a high-class family, being rich, and more importantly, respecting her authority and womanhood. She doesn't seem to have a trusted friend. Aye, similarly, doesn't seem to have reliable friends; most of her friends are virtual ones, not real; her girlfriend is marrying somebody she got to know through the internet. However, whereas, Mahmonir looks for an old friend belonging to the high social class, Aye, looks to the future for finding a friend, no matter what class (s)he belongs to. The behavioral code Aye follows is not understood by her mother, but is appreciated by her grandmother just because it is something modern. Mahmonir feels modernity belongs to high-class people. Arezoo, on the other hand, feels that her daughter is careless (bikhial); she does not take any responsibility in life. For Aye, whatever happens is welcomed, while for Arezoo development, improvement, maturity is important; this is shown in the interest they show in the kind of gift they receive(d): one of the nostalgias of Arezoo is the caterpillar his father used to buy her; Aye, however, likes to blindly receive a small prize from the lucky dip (Tokhme morg Shansi). This is true with regard to friends Arezoo chooses: unlike Aye's friends, hers are trustworthy and mature.

Generally speaking, Arezoo is strong both physically and mentally. She sees friendship as an important issue. Mahmonir, the stubborn woman, is dependent both socially and financially.

Aye is dependent on her mother only financially. The world and friends she is interested in are virtual. She doesn't have a well-marked boundary in her relation.

Conclusion

The novel depicts the three generations stereotypically as the past, present and future. While there are some gaps between

the second generation (Arezoo) with the first and the third, there seems to be more common psychological and cultural outlooks between the first and the third generations(Mahmonir and Aye, respectively)

The three generations are identified textually as follows:

Arezoo conveys her attitude through words that would have expressed anger and agitation toward both her mother and her daughter. They, in turn, seem to resemble the luxurious world before the revolution and the modern world. To Mahmonir, Arezoo does not live up to certain standards (of neatness, physical appearance, responsiveness to family standards, and so on). Arezoo developed feelings for the desirability of preserving certain cultural values and moderation in behavior and clothes. She directly and indirectly objects to the standards and values imposed by her mother and her daughter. She doesn't like parties; she likes helping people; she doesn't care about her physical appearance. Arezoo has some strong ties with the values of the past. Different experiences of Arezoo and Aye led them to have different orientations towards the future.

The past (Mahmonir) is tied fast to certain class-bound prestige; the present (Arezoo) is being misunderstood and ignored; and the future (Aye) is disorganized with no discipline.

References

- Anastasiag, S. and Stephanos Paraskevopoulos (2004). Images of nature by tourism and environmentalist discourses in visitors books: a critical discourse analysis of ecotourism. *Discourse & Society*: Vol 15(1): 105–129.
- Bahktin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press).
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Longman
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.
- Hodge, R., & Kress, G. (1993). *Language as ideology*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, Gunther (1985). Ideological structures in discourse. In Teun A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis* ,vol.4 (pp. 27-42), London: Academic Press.
- KhosraviNik, Majid(2010) 'Actor descriptions, action attributions, and argumentation: towards a systematization of CDA analytical categories in the representation of social groups ', *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7: 1, 55-72.
- Sykes, Mary (1985). Discrimination in discourse. In Teun A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis*, vol.4 (pp.83-101), London: Academic Press.
- van Dijk (1988). *News as discourse*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- van Dijk, Teun A. (2001). *Critical discourse analysis*. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis*, (pp.1-43). Malden, Mass: Blackwell.
- van Dijk, Teun A. (2004). *From text grammar to critical discourse analysis: a brief academic autobiography*. Derived from: <http://www.discourses.org/From%20text%20grammar%20to%20critical%20discourse%20analysis.html>
- van Leeuwen, T. (1996). The representation of social actors. In Carmen Rosa Caldas- Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices*, (pp. 32-71). London: Routledge.
- Persian Reference:
- Pirzad, R. (1999). *Adat Mikonim(We'll Get Used to It)*, Tehran: Markaz Publisher.