EXPLORING SUPPRESSION AND CONFLICT IN THE DISCOURSES OF MOHSIN HAMID'S *MOTH SMOKE*

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: This paper explores suppression and conflicts projected through the linguistic choices used by the characters in *Moth Smoke*. The chief argument of the study is to analyze as to how the less powerful are suppressed through language and how far such discourses give rise to conflicts and cause an imbalance in society.

Methodology: The study uses Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodological and theoretical framework. The role of CDA is to expose the evils constructed in a piece of literature. It provides the essential tools for analyzing social evils and injustices. As the novel is replete with social inequalities and injustices, CDA is proper for the critical investigation of the evils understudy.

Principal Findings: Most of the time, the powerful strive to control the institutions while the powerless have no access to basic needs. The study explored the themes of suppression of the powerless strata of society. It also explored the theme of conflict due to the unequal distribution of wealth and privileges in society. Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke (2000) depicts the Pakistani society constructing the distinction between the two classes described in the novel.

Application of the Study: This research will help teachers and students who wish to analyze literary pieces objectively. This research is helpful to bring to light the suppression of the powerless by the powerful, power exercise, and conflict between the two social groups through the use of language.

Novelty/Originality of the Study: Hamid's Moth Smoke has been analyzed from many perspectives, but the current study explores suppression, conflict, and power abuse from the standpoint of CDA. The study is not descriptive but critical as well as explanatory, which makes it original and unique.

Keywords: CDA, Fairclough's Approach to CDA, Moth Smoke, Power, Suppression.

INTRODUCTION

Modern society has become complex today even more than a decade because of the modern lifestyle that has given birth to manifold conflicts between the different social groups. In such a society, the more powerless falls victim to the wrath and suppression of the more powerful that creates a rift between human beings. Keeping in view this phenomenon, the current paper explores the situations where the weaker are exploited and the unequal power relations are exercised through Language in Mohsin Hamid's notable novel (Hamid, 2000).

Moth Smoke depicted an unstable society both socially and politically. The producer of the text discursively presented dominance of one group of the society over the other and supersession of powerless people who have no value and status in the society depicted in the discourse. Hamid represented the powerful strata of Pakistan and mirrored every social injustice such as abuse of power, conflict, suppression, and inequality, etc. (Lahiri, 2000). All these power relations, conflict, and suppression of powerlessness by powerful people in the society are constructed in different discourses of the text (Awan et al., 2016).

Hamid's *Moth Smoke* is about the internal makeup of Pakistani society. It depicts the character of Aurangzeb (Ozi) as the member of the powerful class and Daru Shezad, the member of the powerless class. The difference in social class is mostly due to the economic status of people in society. It is the economic situation that makes a difference between the two groups of people in a society (Hamid, 2000).

Fairclough (1989) views the situations of discourse at social and institutional levels and discusses how a discussion is dogged by these levels of social makeup. He determines the way through which the social orders are constructed. In CDA, we will be sensitive to the characteristics of the institutions and society we are concerned with.

Economic production is the source of the relationship between various social groups, which extends to the whole society. As we observe that the upper-class exercises power to control the state. The state institutions also play a big role in the preservation of the power of capitalists and the dominating of the powerless class (Fairclough, 1989).

Ideological power is an important component of political and economic power. The function of power is to project practices as common sense and universal, and also has significance because it is used in the text (discourse). Fairclough (1989) says that power can be exercised and maintained through consent or force. In his own words, he puts in this

regard that "Ideology is the key mechanism of rule by consent, and because it is the favored vehicle of ideology, discourse is of considerable social significance in this connection."

Fairclough (2009) considers power as a complex concept and puts forward various conflicting theories of power. He says that the word *power* can be used in various senses such as the power to, power over, and power behind discourse.

The rationale of the research and objective

Human beings exercise power in different ways, and the consideration of the different ways leads us to relationships of power between individuals. People either have power or try to have power over others. The novel under study represented the powerful strata of the society and constructed every social injustice, i.e., power abuse, conflict, and suppression. This study explores the mentioned issues constructed in the novel from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the main focus of the study is to explore and critically analyze the discursive representations of suppression and conflicts due to unequal power distribution in the novel, an attempt is made to elucidate how these issues are discursively constructed in a variety of discourses. This portion of the study is about 'review of related literature and 'theoretical framework,' which comments and critically discusses the subtopics concerned with the novel under study. These arguments will shed light on what suppression and authority mean to various theorists and researchers belonging to varied disciplines (Rangani, 2016).

Many researchers have analyzed moth Smoke, but no research has been conducted so far to analyze the issues under-study in the novel from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The producer of the novel constructs social problems in the society such as suppression, conflict, socio-political and socio-economical discrimination, and the corrupt system of law and order through different discourses in the novel. The novel's protagonist belongs to a middle class of society, working in a bank in Lahore, and now has been removed from his job because of having no influential connections (Yaqoob, 2010). The protagonist's character constructs such a man who belongs to a middle class, but he desires to live such a life like that of elites. He was a well-qualified person but having no influential relations; he could not found a good job for himself. On the other hand, his less qualified friends who belong to rich families have good jobs and positions because they got their degrees from foreign universities. This was the cause that alienated and aggravated him for them (EXCERPT: A people divided, 2008).

The novel's story discursively represents three main characters, e.g., Daru Shezad, Aurangzeb, and Mumtaz—the wife of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb belongs to the upper class of society and is the son of a corrupt retired officer. He is the main character and the main source of his father's business of money laundering. Both the protagonist and Aurangzeb were childhood friends who schooled and played together. The protagonist begins secrete affairs with his friend's wife (Mumtaz) and maintains an unfair relationship. This affair leads him to his decisive destruction. He faces the allegation of a kill which is not committed by him, but the crime is committed by Aurangzeb (Azad, 2016).

Social Issues

The novel understudy represents socio-political and socio-economic conditions of Pakistani society, a society in which the main cause of suppression and conflict is the unequal distribution of wealth and powers. In her article titled "*Socioeconomic Problems of Pakistan,"* Khan (2016) says that due to the over the populace, the Pakistani society faces a lot of problems such as unemployment, inequality, corruption, and poor administration in the institutions of health, education, and sanitation. The main cause of Pakistan's making low progress compare to the other countries is that our infrastructure is still in bad conditions. She further says that the social differences in status and power have broadened economic issues in Pakistan. Therefore, the main concern of the current study is to deal with the main cause due to which all these issues arose and shaped society.

Conflict and Suppression

Malik (2017) divides the society constructed in the novel into two strata——air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned. He describes the people of the first strata as less than the second strata but still enjoys all power and all privileges, while the second group has no power and fights for their rights. Butt (2008) asserts that the people relating to the second stratum/group make efforts to attain the same place and status which the first group has. The researcher asserts that this kind of effort for attaining the same position causes social conflict between the two classes.

Research on the novel from the perspective of CDA is rare. In a similar study, Ramzan and Khan (2020) have explored the powerlessness in the novel understudy from the perspective of CDA. The main concern of the research study is to investigate and analyze the communicative procedure as to how the less powerful strata of the society are made to consider themselves as inferior. Moreover, they highlighted the common practice in today's society where every man wants to show himself superior through the use of Language.

Social Issues and CDA

Fairclough's (1989) approach to Critical Discourse Analysis is followed as the theoretical framework to analyze the different discourses of Hamid's *Moth Smoke*, as it covers both the multi-dimensional and multi-functional aspects of the discourse (text). The concerned views regarding narrative discourse (text), power relations, and conflict of Foucault (1976, 1980, 1984), Fairclough (1989, 1992), Van Dijk (2008), and Mills (2008) are applied during the process of analysis.

Norman Fairclough is the main proponent of Critical Discourse Analysis. According to Fairclough (1989), CDA is a method through which we examine social and cultural modifications that can be used to complain against the abuse of power and dominance of the powerful over the less powerful strata of the society. Fairclough asserts that Language shapes social identifications, communications, our systems of knowledge and ideas, and as a result, they construct Language. He gave name to his approach as Critical Language Study (CLS). The foremost purpose of Fairclough's CDA can be taken as the theoretical part, as to provide help in correcting the huge apathy of people concerning the importance of Language in changing, producing, and maintaining social power relationships, while the second purpose of his approach is the practical feature as it helps in raising knowledge about the influence of a language on the supremacy of one group of society over the other group (Elsharkawy, 2017).

Fairclough considers discourse as "a form of social process" (Fairclough, 1992 p. 63). He constructs diversity between text and discourse and asserts that discourse investigates social and moral values while the text is a type of creation.

As the study is concerned with exploring the discursive representation and depiction of power, suppression, and conflict in the novel under-study, therefore, an attempt is made to elucidate as to how such issues for numerous socio-political and socio-economic perspectives are discursively represented in the discourses of the novel (Reiman, 1987).

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research is a critical examination as well as exploration of the discursive constructions of power issues in the novel Moth Smoke by Mohsin Hamid-- a contemporary Pakistani novelist. This research work explores how suppression and conflicts arise out of language use by the participants in the text (discourse). It also includes a thorough examination of suppression of the powerless by the powerful, the ideological construction of power in the society, and inequality in power distribution. In this regard, it mainly focuses on power relations between the social groups depicted in the novel *Moth Smoke*. The present study uses Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. The framework of Fairclough's CDA is related to three processes of analysis. It is concerned with three interconnected dimensions of discourse. Fairclough says that the three dimensions of investigation require three kinds of analysis which are discussed below:

Description: In this stage of the investigation, the researcher deals with formal properties of the text, i.e., vocabulary, speech practices, and grammar.

Interpretation: In this level of analysis, we mainly focus on the procedures through which the text is produced.

Explanation: In this level of explanation, the researcher's main concern is to deal with the social and historical circumstances that direct these procedures.

Fairclough's framework of (CDA) is a broad approach, which covers multi-dimensional, multi-functional, critical, and historical aspects of societal discourse (text). The multi-dimensional feature of Fairclough's approach considers discourse from three perspectives; (1) discursive practice of discourse. (2) Discourse as text and (3) Social practice of discourse (Fairclough, 1992). Discourse as a text is taken as integrating a variety of linguistics elements within its inner structure to convey certain senses and produce certain effects on the readers as receivers of the discourse. Discourse, in this regard, is viewed as imparting meanings through the manipulation of linguistics elements in the discourse. In this way, the process of exploring the formal aspects of the text helps us to unveil the meaning that is communicated through the discourse.

CDA deals with the critical inspection of discourse and conversation. Social issues, Power relationships, and knowledge created through text (discourse) are the basic concerns of CDA (Fairclough, 2013). CDA is a field that deals with critical inspection of written as well as spoken texts to embody and construct the discursive ways of power abuse, inequality, and suppression (Van Dijk 1993). Focusing on the use of Language, Fairclough (2001) argued the objectives of his approach to contribute to the public's awareness of the suppressive attitudes of the influential strata of society. Critical Discourse Analysis is a research method through which the way of the abuse of power and suppression of participants can be analyzed. The discourses of the novel under-study are loaded with conflicts and suppression where the powerless are often targeted and are made feel suppressed (Mirzaee and Hamidi, 2012).

Fairclough's model provides ten main questions (see Appendix), as well as sub-questions (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 110-112) for the analysis of discourse (text). Moreover, the mentioned ten questions are separated into three groups: grammar, Vocabulary, and Textual Structures. The current study adopts the above framework and dividing the critical analysis into three levels, i.e., Description, Interpretation, and Explanation.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study was concerned with the critical investigation of suppression, power relationship, and conflict. In this regard, the researcher selected the excerpts that are relevant to the present study. In the sequential process of analysis of the novel understudy, every excerpt is viewed as discourse. The respective passages are given numbers in sequences. All the individual excerpts have their thematic title following the research topic.

Furthermore, each one excerpt is analyzed, explained, and interpreted through Fairclough's (1989) framework. His analytical method is practiced in the act of meaning-making. The main issues in society, such as suppression, conflict, and power abuse, are explored and interpreted in the text under study.

Discursive Representation of Suppression

The selected excerpts discursively and linguistically construct suppression in different ways through Language. There are selected three extracts from the novel for critical analysis. Excerpt 1 is taken from page 7, and excerpt 2 is taken from page 21, and excerpt 3 is taken from page 102 of the novel under study. All the selected excerpts are written in the italicized form.

Excerpt 1

"Their eyes flick around them; their lips silently voice oratories of power and emotions" (Hamid, 2000, p.7).

The selected excerpt constructs a circumstance of law proceedings in court. Here, the main focus is laid on the suppressive looks of the two lawyers. Both the lawyers are shown as frightening and hung— one is short and fat while the other is tall.

Description of the Data

Fairclough's (1989) description level mainly concerns the formal properties of the text. A text's formal properties (discourse) are the vocabulary and speech acts, punctuation, and grammar in the selected text. During the analysis of the text, Fairclough's ten main questions and sub-question are brought into practice. The use of vocabulary is formal. The text producer has shaped some kind of suppressive location here, which brings fear in the participants.

The extract contains only one complex sentence. The author of the novel has discursively constructed some kind of suppressive conditions in the discourse which prevail terror and dread. In this regard, the ideologically loaded words, phrases, and expressions are the verbal phrase 'flick around' and the expression 'silently voice oratories of power. The phrase 'silently voice' can be taken as a 'figure of speech' named oxymoron, which combines words having opposite meanings. The two clauses 'their eye flick around them' and 'their lips… of power' contain the possessive pronoun 'their' (two occurrences) has its relational values and used inclusively.

Here, only one compound sentence has been selected, which has two clauses. A logical connecter to connect the two clauses 'and' (one occurrence) is used in the extract. In this extract, the including clauses have their own grammatical, experiential features, and different types of processes. Both of the clauses bear their subjects (S), verbs (V), and objects (O) which construct action.

Interpretation and Explanation of the Data

The expression discursively depicts suppression of the powerless strata of society. The word 'power' represents dominance discursively, and the word emotion shows the eagerness of the legal representatives to suppress the accused depicted in the novel under study. The extract constructs the lawyers' suppressive natures; both of them blindly chase wealth and destroy the innocent life of the suppressed for a kill that is not committed by him.

The uses of linguistic features in the discourses construct the creative values of the text producer. The expression under-analysis constructs the discursive depiction of suppression through the dominative way of the lawyers. The lexicographic meaning of the word 'power' is 'the ability to control things or people. Similarly, the word 'lawyer' is the nominalization of a person who assists people in matters of law. Here, it shows the lawyers as liars and heartless in the social context represented in the novel.

Excerpt 2

"…Mr. Jiwan's attempt to impose a feudal hierarchy on my office… Do you know who I am?… I can have you thrown on the street" (Hamid,2000, p.21).

The extract is the combination of different sentences taken from the novel. These sentences have been selected from the discussion, which takes place between two participants. The producer of the text constructs suppression through the discourse between an elite and a bank cashier in a bank. The whole extract discursively shows the suppressive attitude of Mr. Jiwan—the elite, towards the suppressed Daru Shezad—the protagonist of the novel.

Description of the Data

Fairclough's (1989) framework is followed in the overall process of analysis of the selected text. The extract contains

three sentences. The Language used in this extract is informal because the discussion takes place between participants belonging to the two different social classes, i.e., the elites and the middle class. The significant words, expressions, and sentences are the adjectival phrase 'feudal hierarchy' in the first sentence, the second sentence 'do you know who I am and the word 'thrown' in the third sentence. Sentence first is a simple declarative; sentence 2 is an interrogative one, while sentence 3 is passive.

The possessive pronoun 'my' is used one time, the first person pronoun 'I' is used two times, and the second person pronoun 'you' is used two times in the three sentences of the selected passage. All these pronouns are used exclusively, i.e., not sharing but available to only one person.

Interpretation and Explanation of the Data

This extract also constructs suppression through the use of institutional power. Although Mr. Jiwan does not belong to the office, he still exercises power through his influential connections with the Branch Manager and is part of the capitalist strata. The novel understudy constructs a society where capital is considered the standard of living, and those who have no capital are considered low and less privileged.

The phrase 'feudal hierarchy' in sentence 1 points towards the system of feudalism in which all the resources of the state are controlled by few lords and where there is no value of the rights of common people. The phrase, here, discursively constructs the dominance and control of the capitalists over the institutions of the state in the social context. The pronoun 'who' in sentence 2 acts as a logical connector which connects the two classed and represented the speaker's supremacy and power in the context of the text (discourse).

Moreover, the word 'thrown' in sentence 3 discursively shows the superiority of the elites in the society who have the power to throw away someone from the position or place he has in the society. The producer of the discourse represents the power relations in the society where the powerful controls all the institutions and resources of the state and the powerless have no control and rights.

The Discursive Construction of Conflict

It is already discussed that the powerful strata always suppress the less powerful through the use of Language and treat them as having no right to live in the society or part of the society. This is the main cause due to which there arise conflicts and cause an imbalance in society, and this imbalance creates a huge gulf between the two classes of the society where the powerful strata often strive to control the institutions while the powerless have no access to the basic needs.

Excerpt 3

(1)."The first group; large and sweaty, contains those referred to as the masses." (2). "The second group is much smaller, but its members exercise vastly greater control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed the elite." (3). "The distinction between members of these two groups made based on control of an important resource: air-conditioning."(Hamid,2000, p.102)

The excerpt contains three sentences and given numbers. It discursively constructs the difference and gulf between the two social classes that are elites and masses. The producer of the text constructs the constant conflict between the two groups through the speech of Professor Superb in a provincial seminar on social class in Pakistan. In this extract, the author constructed the two social groups and put stress on the need to redistribute wealth on an equal basis.

Description of the Data

This excerpt is a formal speech by Professor Julius Superb in a public seminar. All the sentences of the extract are complex and have coordinate and subordinate clauses. Some of the sentences of the extract contain explanatory phrases. It contains some significant ideological words, clauses, expressions, and phrases such as the phrase 'large and sweaty,' and 'masses' in sentence 1, the expression 'control over… environment' in sentence 2, the words 'distinction' and 'groups' in sentence 3.

Sentence 1 has an explanatory phrase 'large and sweaty, and the comparative adjectives "much smaller" in sentence 2 are attributions. There are used some logical connectors such as 'and' (two occurrences) in sentence 1 and 2, 'as' in sentence 1, 'but' in sentence 2, which connect words, clauses as well as sentences. Sentence 1 is a simple declarative sentence containing its explanatory phrase, sentence 2 is a complex one containing its subordinate and coordinate clauses, and sentence 3 is also a simple declarative one. The discourse has some pronouns used to construct relational such as the possessive pronouns 'its' and 'their' are used inclusively.

Interpretation and Explanation of the Data

The extract is a simple narrative that represents the huge gulf between the powerful and the powerless due to the unequal distribution of capital and rights. The text producer constructs the Pakistani society where elites have dominance and control over overall resources while poor and helpless people have no control and are treated distinctively (Rehman, 2016).

The collocation of the adjectives 'large' and 'sweaty' in the first sentence construct an impression that the lower strata of the society are greater in number than the upper strata and also hard workers who work day long but still have no privilege or given them the basic needs of life. In the second sentence, two adjectives are collocated, i.e., 'much smaller,' which stand for a very less number of participants or individuals of the society. Moreover, in the same sentence, the 'vastly great power" is used to represent the limit or range of power one exercises. The adverb 'vastly' means great in range, and the word 'great' again is used as an adjective that represents the same meaning of a range of power and dominance which the elites exercise "over their immediate environment." The word "distinction" in the third sentence is an abstract noun and means 'the difference between individuals of the two classes, i.e., the upper and the lower.'

From the above discussion, we can conclude that the text (discourse) producer has effectively constructed conflict between the two social classes due to alienation and class distinction. The selected extract constructs the distinction and conflict in the relationship between individuals of the two social classes because of the unequal distribution of powers, privileges, and rights.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, Hamid has projected the issue of powerlessness and powerfulness through linguistic choices given to various characters. Through the perspective of CDA, it is surfaced that the upper strata leave no stone unturned in making others downtrodden. The study explored the themes of suppression of the lower strata by the upper strata of the society. Moreover, it also explored the theme of class distinction and conflict due to the unequal division of powers and wealth in the society and the society in which the poor have no right to provide them with their basic needs and compensation for their work.

LIMITATION

This paper is limited to Hamid's novel *Moth Smoke*. The study selected three excerpts from the novel, which are mainly concerned with the issues under study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Critical Discourse Analysis can be applied further to other literary pieces that construct social issues such as dominance, power abuse, suppression, conflict, etc. Similarly, other researchers can use stylistics or literary models to unearth other issues in the novel *Moth Smoke*.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Muhammad Ramzan set the methodology and worked on data Analysis and its Interpretation and abstract. Dr. Abdul Karim Khan sought out Literature Review for the current paper and added information to the Discussion. Dr. Abdus Samad worked on the Introduction and Proofread the paper, and Shah Nawaz Khan collected data in collaboration with the corresponding author and reviewed the paper after completion.

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Appendix

A Vocabulary

1. What experiential values do words have?

What classification schemes are drawn upon?

Are there words which are ideologically contested?

Is there rewording or over-wording?

What ideologically significant meaning relations are there between words?

2. What relational values do words have?

Are there euphemistic expressions?

Are there markedly formal or informal words?

3. What expressive values do words have?

4. What metaphors are used?

B Grammar

5. What experiential values do grammatical features have?

What types of processes and participants predominate?

Is agency unclear? Are processes what they seem?

Are normalizations used? Are sentences active or passive?

Are sentences positive or negative?

6. What relational values do grammatical features have?

What modes are used?

Are there important features of relational modality?

Are the pronouns we and you used, and if so, how?

7. What expressive values do grammatical features have?

> Are there important features of expressive modality?

8. How are (simple) sentences linked together?

> What logical connectors are used?

> Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or/ subordination?

> What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

C Textual structures

9. What interactional conventions are used?

> Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

10. What larger scale structures does the text have?

> Fairclough (1989: 110-2)