

An Analysis of “Tigers on the Tenth Day” based on Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Approach

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Received: 2016/10/9

Accepted: 2018/1/1

Abstract

Tamer is one of the most outstanding fiction writers and satirists in the Arab world. The themes of the majority of his stories are the covert or overt political and social truths of his society, which are sometimes expressed allegorically and symbolically, and sometimes explicitly. Exploring the social dimensions of the story “The Tigers on the Tenth Day” and analyzing the symbolic life of the tiger, this paper aims to study the fundamental structures of Syrian society and the dominance of problems such as the prevalence of disappointment, humiliation, poverty and hunger. As an example of contemporary Arab fictional literature, this short story is read through Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis.

Employing a formal language mixed with social satire, Tamer deals with the obstacles blocking the struggle and the flowering of the Arab-Syrian man’s inherent talents due to the prevalence of disappointment and humiliation, in general, and Syrian man’s defeat and degradation, in particular. Despite the author’s critical inclination, the story’s language is not straightforward, so that the author may remain protected from tyrannical rulers. But using symbols and allegories, he criticizes his society, nonetheless. Therefore, using Fairclough’s critical discourse, we can reveal the text’s encoded layers as well as the levels of the ten divisions of the life of the tigers on the tenth day.

Keywords: Critical Discourse, Fairclough, Tigers on The Tenth Day, Zakaria Tamer.

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Extended abstract

1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis is the most recent approach in discourse analysis. This approach, which is philosophically influenced by Michel Foucault, Freud, and Marx, aims to connect the formalist approach to language with social issues, thus creating a situation in which the linguist considers himself more of a responsible figure towards social matters. Critical discourse analysis does not confine itself to analysis on the description level; it considers the level of interpretation as well. In fact, critical discourse analysis promotes text analysis from the level of descriptive adequacy to the level of interpretive adequacy. Moreover, it involves elements including ideology, power, history, etc. in relation to language, thus enjoying a more inclusive linguistic reality in the interpretation of texts. On the other hand, it could be mentioned that discourse studies certain social conditions due to whose influence a text is created. Also, it interprets the social situation in which a text is located. Therefore, on the one hand, discourse is the linguistic study of social system, and, on the other, it is the sociological study of language.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this field, Norman Fairclough, who is a prominent figure in discursive discussions, believes that there is a dialectical relationship between the microstructures of discourse (linguistic features) and the macrostructures of society (ideology and social structures). From his point of view, as one of the authorities in the field of critical discourse analysis, discourse analysis includes three levels, namely, description, interpretation, and explanation. In this proposed plan, Fairclough regards description as the precondition for interpretation and explanation. Tamer published his first collection of stories in 1960. His stories have a surreal atmosphere, humor is significant in them, and they are written in a simple language. The theme of the majority of his stories, including "Tigers on the Tenth Day", is the latent and obvious social and political truths, which are presented sometimes in a symbolic and encoded manner, and sometimes in an explicit and clear way. Due

to the paradoxes they face between their ideal and external world, the heroes of Tamer's stories take shelter in a dream world to create their ideal society, and sometimes they just surrender with no efforts in order to bring about change in a suppressive reality.

3. Methodology

We try to analyze the text of "Tigers on the Tenth Day" following Fairclough's critical-discourse approach. The analysis is applied on three levels: At the description level only text analysis is dealt with. But the textual features considered for analysis are mostly selective and include those features which are more effective in critical analysis. The vocabulary (experimental values and semantic relations of the vocabulary from an ideological point of view, relational values, and studying the formal or colloquial aspects of phrases, and expressive values and metaphors), syntax (processes and their participants, active or passive statements, positive or negative statements, declarative, interrogative, and imperative aspects, the use of 'we' and 'you' pronouns, simple and compound sentences) and textual constructs are among the components which are studied on the description level.

Interpretation is a combination of text contents and the interpreter's mentality. By the interpreter's mentality we mean the background knowledge that the interpreter applies in text interpretation. In the interpreter's view, the virtual features of a text are in fact like clues which activate the elements of the interpreter's background knowledge, and are the product of the dialectical relationship between these clues and the interpreter's background knowledge. In fact, on the interpretation level, what is studied includes the discourse participants' interpretation of situational and textual context, the action and the people involved in it, as well as the relations among them, and language's role in advancing the action, and the type of discourse.

On the explanation level, institutional and social levels are studied as an element in the processes of society. In addition, on this level the story can be considered for the degree to which it encompasses social and cultural issues and how explicitly they are dealt with. The aim of this level is discursive description as a part of a social process. Explanation depends on the relation between interaction and social context. In fact,

it could be said that it is related to the social determination of production, interpretation processes, and their social influences. At the explanation level of the story, public hunger and poverty are introduced as the causes of Arab Man's despair and widespread frustration, in general, and, Syrian Man's hardship and failure, in particular. And no deterring element is introduced against it except submission. Therefore, in power relations, the general public, despite all their power, were not able to overcome the ruling power in society. As a result, the representation of social and moral issues in the story entails ideological meanings.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this story, tiger, as the symbol for the Arab Man, loses its main and essential identity (freedom), despite its inherent self-esteem and greatness and submits to the humiliating life of captivity in the cage, hunger, and absolute obedience due to need.

5. Conclusion

In this story, the writer by citing memoirs which indicates bitter political, social, and economic realities surrounding Arab Man's life, in general, and Syrian Man's, in particular, has reflected some of their individual and social problems as well as their hardship and humiliation. The main character of the story is an example of the oppressor (tamer)/oppressed (tiger) confrontation, which are regarded as symbols of social class. The most important statements of the story are the tamer's instrumental use of the tiger's hunger, and the diversity of attacking its needs in different manners, which, due to the hard and intolerable political, social, economic, and cultural conditions in Arab society leads to the submission and surrender of the main character in this oppositional discourse.

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