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DEMONSTRATION OF GENDER IN CHILDREN FANTASY FICTION: A SEMIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS(SDA) OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STORY BOOKS

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ABSTRACT

This study concentrates on children's fantasy fiction to investigate gender representations in a selection of elementary school storybooks. This study reveals gender ideology in terms of how gender stereotypes are represented via linguistic and semiotic means. Children's literature influences gender ideology. When students read stories with stereotypically portrayed characters, they reinforce preconceived notions. Stories are constructed in cultural context. Children are products of this particular cultural context, and they tend to conduct in accordance with the gendered ideologies ingrained in cultural discourse. Fantasy novels are historical records. The current qualitative study concentrates on children's literature to examine gender representations. The research examines fifteen works of children's fantasy fiction. The data was collected using the technique of systematic sampling. For the Critical Discourse Analysis of narratives, a qualitative approach has been employed, and the frameworks of Fairclough (1995), Barthes (1974), and Kruger (2000) have been utilised for critical and semi-logical analysis. The findings indicate that 21st-century children's fantasy literature emphasises gender representations. In patriarchal societies, males are dominant, as has been observed. Because they have power, they are free to exercise their free will in every situation, whereas women are valued for domestic purposes. In some legends, women have been portrayed as demons, while men have been depicted as dependent on women. The study also reveals the role of customs

and traditions in determining the destinies of women. Through the analysis of picture books, this study expands our understanding of the phenomenon of gender representations and encourages future scholars to conduct additional academic research on gender representations in other pedagogical sources, such as novels, dramas, morning shows, newspapers, magazines, and talk shows, etc.

INTRODUCTION

This study concentrates on children's fantasy fiction to investigate gender representations in a selection of elementary school storybooks. This study reveals gender ideology in terms of how gender stereotypes are represented via linguistic and semiotic means. Children's literature influences gender ideology. When students read stories with stereotypically portrayed characters, they reinforce preconceived notions. Stories are constructed in cultural context. Children are products of this particular cultural context, and they tend to conduct in accordance with the gendered ideologies ingrained in cultural discourse. Fantasy novels are historical records. They change over time in accordance with society's shifting values. Fairy tales are cultural artefacts. Storybooks at the elementary level in schools influence the behaviour of young children.

Statement of the Purpose

This study concentrates on a discourse analysis of selected children's books that depict gender representations. In order to access and interpret the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings, the present research considers the specific uses of linguistic objects in the discourses of children's books. The present study also analyses gender representations by various ideological constructions depicted in the language of children's literature. The research contributes to a greater understanding of the significance of linguistic elements in children's fantasy fiction, i.e., storybooks. According to Pillay (2008), female characters in children's fantasy fiction are still depicted as submissive individuals. Gender stereotypes are prevalent and emphasise traditional versus contemporary roles. The present research examines the discourses of children's fantasy literature in order to analyse gender representations.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the present study:

To examine representations of gender stereotypes by analysing linguistic and semiotic discourse.

To examine how male and female characters are portrayed.

To highlight the projected portrayal of significant characters, with particular attention to language, gender, and ideology.

To compare and contrast the portrayal of gender in the stories.

Research Questions

This study's primary research concerns are as follows.

How are gender stereotypes propagated linguistically and semantically in children's fantasy books taught at Army Public School Multan at the primary level in 2019?

How are gender roles depicted in picture books written for elementary-aged children?

Research Design

The present study analyzes gender representation in children's fantasy fiction through the discourses of selected primary school story books. This research analyzes story books' verbal and visual discourse qualitatively to uncover the constructed gender ideologies, exhibiting female subjugation under patriarchy and power relations, through the choices of specific linguistic items. For analyzing gender representations, the critical discourse analysis of verbal discourses of story books reveals men as superior and women as inferior human beings. The researcher interprets gender representation through embedded layers of story books' language and analyzes the organizational linguistic and semiotic settings of story books. The current study highlights the following thematic categories to highlight gender representations that are as follows:

1. Reversed Gender Roles in Hansel and Gretel
2. Animals called by Gender Pronouns
3. Female Subjugation and Domestication
4. Concept of Patriarchy
5. Male as Powerful and Dominant
6. The Element of Materialism in both genders
7. Women portrayed as witches

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Cuthew (1998), children's fantasy fiction literature emerged in the late eighteenth century and attained its zenith in the nineteenth century. Children's storybooks served as a valuable source for the creation of fantasy fictions with moralistic undertones for children.

According to Hunt (1999), children's fantasy fictions are an essential genre for educating children in a specific context. Children's comprehension of gender roles and socialisation is affected by the pictures and stories they see and read. Crew (2002) defined the term 'Fantasy' in literature as a means to describe fictions that are typically novel-length but contain supernatural and fantastical elements. Additionally, he described the two subgenres of fantasy fiction: Low Fantasy and High Fantasy. In 'Low Fantasy Fiction,' fictitious events occur in the real world and irrational elements function rationally, whereas in 'High Fantasy Fiction,' reality is revealed through various literary devices, such as symbols, images, etc.

According to Linda's (2004) research, children's books are an excellent source of entertainment. These children's books also demonstrate gender ideology and represent cultural norms and societal values. Thus, story authors transmit gender stereotypes to children to help them comprehend their culture, ideology, and gender stereotypes, etc.

In their research, Jabeen and Mehmood (2014) demonstrated that children's literature is an excellent educational aid, but it also moulds minds and imparts gender identities. Children who peruse children's books gain an understanding of gender-specific responsibilities. In conventional children's stories, stereotypical characters have been developed. Women are portrayed as fragile, delicate princesses who are harmed by an obstacle, whereas men are portrayed as powerful princes who engage in battles to rescue their princesses. Thus, the depiction of gender in fantasy literature subconsciously prepares children to acquire stereotypical gendered ideologies regarding how to behave as male or female members of society. Children's personalities are shaped by fantasy literature. In this manner, socialisation of infants is achieved. According to Ashton (1983), reading stories determines gender-ideological interpretations. Ideologies are formed by social practises within a particular context. In this fashion, masculine and feminine categories function in accordance with society's shared beliefs. The linguistic items utilised in children's fantasy literature illustrate gender-stereotypical ideologies that influence schoolchildren's perceptions. Male and female characters in children's literature are assigned specific gender roles to fulfil, thereby influencing children's social behaviour. Stephen (1992) claimed that linguistic and ideological representations are interconnected. The practise of storytelling emphasises gender representations. Thus, literature influences the reader's ideology and beliefs. Ideology was defined by Van Dijk (1993) as shared beliefs associated with various characteristics such as identity, goals, objectives, and interests, etc. Gender Ideology demonstrates a framework comprising contrasting terms such as good versus evil, genuine versus false, and attractive versus repulsive. These concepts exist in the text of children's books and therefore have a significant influence on their behaviour. The impact of storybooks on children's behaviour inside and outside of the home in various contexts is substantial.

Khursheed et al. (2004) analysed the portrayal of women in secondary-level storybooks taught in Pakistani institutions. This study anticipated that male and female characters in social contexts such as education, career, etc. would exhibit distinct behaviours. The researcher divided the sample study into four categories, with the primary focus on examining textbook stories, plays, essays, and bibliographies excluding poems. They discovered that female characters are depicted less frequently than male characters and that women are accorded less respect than men in various social contexts. In addition, they discovered that in English-language storybooks, women are frequently portrayed as housewives whose social circle is limited to their residences. This result indicates that women continue to be depicted as inferior beings, particularly in school textbooks, while masculine characters enjoy a prestigious status. Children's fairytales convey certain ideologies and persuasive messages.

Research Gap and Novelty

All the writings described above have focused on phenomenon of gender representations whereas, the present study is not similar to all of the above as it employs both linguistic and semiotic models of analyses to investigate how gender is portrayed in children's fantasy fiction i.e., story books. For this reason,

linguistic and semiotic investigations underlie the model of Fairclough (1995) with Barthes' SDA (1974) and Kruger's (2000) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) by concentrating on gender portrayal in primary school story books.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter of research study, the researcher has focused on the selected data i.e. Children's Fantasy Fictions: fifteen story books to analyze phenomenon of gender representations. The selected fifteen story books most significantly suit the target objectives of this research study. The story books have been analyzed under the frameworks of Fairclough (1995), Barthes (1974) & Kruger (2000). There are lots of story books worth discussing as they are full of ideological content, but the researcher has only selected fifteen story books.

Introduction of Story Jack and the Beanstalk

Jack and the Beanstalk is a great children story book that beautifully portrays phenomenon of gender representations through power structures. It has been composed by Martin Salisbury. The story introduces a little family comprising of mother and her son named as Jack. They own a cow and spend a poor life. One day, mother asks her son to sell her cow so that they might be able to get some money for eating food. So Jack goes out of his home to sell cow. One kind man asks Jack to give him cow and he will award him some beans which will prove better than money. Jack agrees and brings beans at home. When mother asks Jack about money than he gives her beans but mother becomes furious and throws beans outside the window as they are of no use. Next morning Jack notices that the beans have grown into a large beanstalk so he decides to climb this beanstalk to see the matter. When he climbed then he saw a long road leading to a castle. He entered into a castle and saw a fearful lady who warned Jack about her cruel husband. Jack was tired too much so he asked lady for some food. The lady served him with soup but suddenly the voice of giant's steps disturbed both of them. The woman hid Jack in a cupboard. Giant came; lady served supper then presented his hen laying golden eggs. When giant slept then boy ran with his golden hen and gave it to his mother. They became rich. The boy went to castle again and this time brought sacks of golden coins. Jack decided third and last time to visit castle and this time when he tried to escape with a golden harp, giant awake and chased Jack. Jack shouted and his mother brought an axe and Jack cut the beanstalk. Giant fell down and died. After this, Jack and his mother lived happily.

Thematic Analysis of Story Jack and the Beanstalk

The current storybook *Jack and the Beanstalk* highlights important themes regarding gender representations. These are as follows:

Male as Powerful and Dominant

The story *Jack and the Beanstalk* shows an important theme of authoritative nature of men through gender lexicalization. The story includes power play between male genders i.e.; Jack the boy and giant. Thus the story exhibit power politics through survival of the fittest phenomenon. Once a giant robbed money

and precious things but when Jack grew older then he fought with giant and snatched all his father’s lost possessions. This can be seen from the following text:

“Fee, fie, foe, fum,
I’ll grind his bones to make my bread!” (Salisbury, 2019, p.13)

The above textual line shows Giant as powerful creature and the following line highlights Jack as brave lad:

“Jack aimed a mighty blow at the beanstalk. Thwack! That was the end of giant.” (Salisbury, 2019, p.13)

The Element of Materialism in both genders

Materialism means to deal with economic stability to bring positive change in living conditions. The present research highlights element of materialism in both genders male and female. A family has been introduced where mother and son both want to have money for better life style. As mother says:

“Now that we have her (magic hen) back, our worries are over.” (Salisbury, 2019, p.15)

The above textual line shows that both genders are materialistic as they consider importance of wealth for improving their lifestyles.

Critical Analysis of Jack and the Beanstalk

For critical discourse analysis of story *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Fairclough’s three dimensional models have been applied that shows the following basic three dimensions:

Textual Analysis - Description of Text

The original text of given story shows past tense narration (e.g; “Once upon a time a boy named Jack lived with his mother.” etc.).(Salisbury, 2019, p.12) The story shows present tense that highlights actions of Jack to change his living conditions. The Jack’s actions have been represented through declarative sentence structures (e.g. “So Jack took the cow to market.” etc.). (Salisbury, 2019, p.15)The following lexical items have been highlighted to focus on phenomenon of gender representations:

Nouns	Generic Pronouns	Verbs
Jack	He	Climbed
Mother	She	Cried
Giant	He	Roared

Interpretation (Discourse Practice)

The story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* highlights gender representations as the male gender such as Jack and the Giant have been shown as strong, independent and powerful male characters. Both are materialistic and greedy and become happy to see worldly possessions. Female gender has been highlighted through domesticity. They live at home and do household activities for their family members such as husband, son etc.

Explanation (Social Practice)

Children’s fantasy fictions represent gender differences and inculcate gender ideology to shape children’ behaviors. The selected storybook has emphasized the significance of masculine gender through their strong and violent actions. The story highlights game of power that circulates between Jack and Giant that shows the supremacy of only male characters who can exercise it. They have been shown as independent and active members of society. This behavior inculcates the idea in male children that they should be strong and independent because they only can exercise power in society.

Semiological Discourse Analysis of Jack and the Beanstalk

For semiological discourse analysis of story, Barthes’s model has been applied that shows the following three important dimensions:

Linguistic Level

This is the first level of semiological discourse analysis. It focuses on semiotic texts that have been highlighted through storybook semiotics. As the following picture tells us about Jack’s family consisting Jack and his mother and Giant’s family comprising of Giant and his wife. When the story starts then Jack is a poor boy and Giant is a strong creature. As the following images indicate Giant’s power and his greedy nature as he becomes happy when he sees his hen laying golden eggs.

The image shows male as powerful and independent gender as the giant has been portrayed as greedy person who always treats his wife rudely.



Iconic Level

The second level of semiological discourse analysis focuses on role of sign system in society. As the following pictures from story indicates the phenomenon of gender representations. The picture shows that now Jack has become a wealthy person because he has exercised his power and has snatched

golden hen from Giant. He has been shown as strong, active and powerful. As the following picture shows:

The image highlights Jack as strong character who snatches golden hen from giant when he is asleep.



The picture shows that golden hen is in hands of Jack and he is moving happily. This also shows materialistic aspect in gender’s psychology.

Level of Signification

The third level of Barthes’s model shows sign system in terms of signifier and signified. As the following pictures indicates:

The image highlights power-play between male genders. Giant tries to kill Jack but Jack is cleverer and he cuts beanstalk and kills giant.



In the pictures, level of signification shows the role of signifier and signified. The signifier is Jack and signified highlights power play of wealth. In the story, power play exercises between masculine genders as a result Jack wins.

Signifier	Signified
Jack	Power
Giant	Greed

Focused Group Discussions

For the focused group discussions about this story, Kruger (2000) model has been applied. The researcher introduced story between two groups for discussions and found the following results.

Linguist Group	Non-Linguist Group
Words: Gender representations: male as powerful, violent and dominant, female as domestic lady and submissive	Words: Male Characters are powerful, Authoritative mood, possessive nature of men, and dominant role of male gender.

beings, Power play, Hegemonic behaviors, Aggression.	
Themes: Role of Patriarchy Men as powerful and independent	Themes: Male as powerful characters Female characters highlight domesticity

The focused group discussion proved effective as the responses from two groups dominated the idea of gender representations.

Introduction of Story The Gingerbread Man

The Gingerbread Man is a great children story book. It has been composed by Peter Stevenson. The story introduces a family consisting of old husband and wife. One day old wife tells her husband about treat. She makes a gingerbread man and keeps it in oven but gingerbread man becomes living being and asks old lady to take him out of oven. When she brings him out of oven then he runs as fast as he could. Little old husband and wife run after him but are unable to catch him and he ran from their house to enjoy life. Next he faces a cow that also chases him to eat as he looks delicious but he runs fast and brags over his fast speed and saves his life from cow. Then he goes further and faces a horse also wants to eat him and runs after him but the gingerbread man becomes successful to save his life from horse as the horse becomes tired by running so fast after gingerbread man. He enjoys life but his time goes bad as he faces a cunning fox that uses his cunningness to trap this gingerbread man. The old fox asks him to listen for some important matter but he doesn't focus on him and runs fast. But after some time, the gingerbread man finds river before him and he is unable to cross the river by running fast. The fox arrives there and asks him to sit on his tail and he will help him in crossing this river. The little gingerbread man becomes agree and sits on his tail but after a short time, he asks her to sit on his back due to heavy wait on tail. The gingerbread man doesn't understand his trickery and follows his guidelines and sits on his back but after sometime, he asks him to sit on his nose due to heavy wait on back. He agrees and sits on his nose. He went straight into his mouth so he got successful and enjoyed eating of the gingerbread man.

Thematic Analysis of Story The Gingerbread Man

The storybook *The Gingerbread Man* highlights important themes regarding gender representations that are as follows:

Male as Powerful and Dominant

The story *The Gingerbread Man* shows an important theme of hegemonic nature of men through selected gender lexicalization. The story includes power play between male genders i.e. the Gingerbread man and old cunning fox. Thus the story exhibit power politics through survival of the fittest phenomenon. Once an old family made gingerbread man for eating but he ran from their house aunt later he was trapped by old cunning fox. The gingerbread man considers himself very strong and this can be seen from the following text:

“Run, run, as fast as you can,
 You cannot catch me,
 I am the Gingerbread Man” (Stevenson, 19, p.26)
 The above textual line shows the gingerbread man as powerful creature but the following line highlights old fox as Cunning animal:
 “I’ll help you, he said, smiling to himself.” (Stevenson, 2019, p.26)

Animals Called By Gender Pronouns

The current story *The Gingerbread Man* shows an important theme by specific use of gender lexicalization. The story includes animal characters that have been represented by gender pronouns such as ‘him, her, he, she, I, and me’ etc. The cow has been represented by pronoun ‘she.’ Animals such as horse and fox have been called by pronoun ‘he’ to show their masculine traits. As the story indicates:

“The horse galloped as fast as he could, but he was not fast enough
 To, catch the Gingerbread man.” (Stevenson, 2019, p.27)
 Through horse and fox, the story declares male members of society as powerful and strong. As the horse says in story:
 “Stop, little man said the horse. You look very good to eat, and I’m hungry!”
 (Stevenson, 2019, p.27)

Critical Analysis of The Gingerbread Man

For critical discourse analysis of story, Fairclough’s three dimensional models have been adopted that shows the following three dimensions:

Textual Analysis - Description of Text

The text of story shows narration through past tense (e.g.; “Once upon a time, a little old woman and a little old man lived by themselves in a little old house by the side of the road.” etc.). (Stevenson, 2019, p.26) The present tense highlights actions of cow, horse, fox and the Gingerbread man through declarative sentence structures (e.g.; “you look very good to eat.” etc.). (Stevenson, 2019, p.28) The following lexical items have been highlighted to focus on phenomenon of gender representations:

Generic Pronouns	Verbs
He	Galoped
She	Make
I	Run

Interpretation (Discourse Practice)

The story of Gingerbread man highlights gender representations as the cunning fox has been shown as strong and clever male character and does efforts to eat

the gingerbread man and becomes successful in his efforts and eats him. The gingerbread man considers himself to smart but is soon trapped by fox.

Explanation (Social Practice)

Children’s fantasy fictions represent gender differences such as the selected storybook has emphasized the masculine gender through power play of strong actions. The power circulates between fox and the gingerbread man that shows only male characters can exercise it. They have been shown as independent and active members of any community. This behavior inculcates the idea in male children that they should be strong and independent because they only can exercise power in society.

Semiological Discourse Analysis of The Gingerbread Man

For semiological discourse analysis of story, Barthes’s model has been applied that shows the following three dimensions:

Linguistic Level

This is the first level of semiological discourse analysis that focuses on semiotic texts. As the following picture tells us about the gingerbread man who runs very fast and no one is able to chase him. There has been shown female characters that are unable to cope male members of community. As old wife and cow becomes unable to trap the gingerbread man. Only the male gender has been given importance.

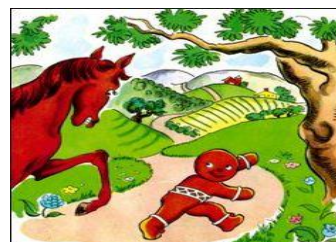
The image shows running gingerbread man and cow is chasing him. It reveals strength of male gender.



Iconic Level

The second level of semiological discourse analysis focuses on the role of sign system in society. As the following pictures from story indicates the highlighted gender representations. The picture shows strong character of gingerbread man who is running hard to exercise his powers in society. He has been shown as strong, active and powerful because the big horse is also unable to chase him.

The picture shows gingerbread man as strong and independent character as no one is able to catch him.



Level of Signification

The third level of Barthes’s model shows signs in terms of signifier and signified. As the following pictures indicates:

The image shows power play as fox with its cleverness becomes successful to catch and eat gingerbread man.



In the pictures, level of signification shows the role of signifier and signified. The signifiers are fox and the gingerbread man and signified highlights power. Power play exercises between masculine genders.

Focused Group Discussions

For the focused group discussions about this story, Kruger (2000) model has been applied. The researcher introduced story between two groups for discussions and found the following result:

Linguist Group	Non-Linguist Group
<p>Words: Gender representations: male as powerful, Trickery, violent and dominant, female as domestic lady, weak and submissive beings, Power play, Hegemonic behaviors, Aggression.</p>	<p>Words: Male Characters are powerful, Authoritative mood, possessive nature of men, and dominant role of male gender.</p>
<p>Themes: Animals called by gender pronouns Men as powerful and independent</p>	<p>Themes: Male as powerful characters Female characters highlight weakness and domesticity.</p>

The focused group discussion proved effective as the responses from two groups dominated the idea of gender representations.

Introduction of Story Beauty and the Beast

Beauty and the Beast is a great children story book. It has been illustrated by Robert Ayton. The story introduces a merchant family comprising of father and his three daughters. The merchant lost his fortune so he had to go several times to far off places for work. The two elder daughters were not happy by the misfortunes but the youngest daughter was very happy and contended over what her father has provided. Therefore, merchant called his youngest daughter ‘Beauty’ due to her gorgeous outlook and beautiful nature. One day he asked his beautiful daughters to demand what they want from him on his return. The two elder daughters asked him to bring heavy jewelry for them but the third daughter demanded nothing expensive just white roses for her on his return.

Merchant started journey and promised to have their demands fulfilled on his return. His work completed and he returned to his home but due to darkness, he lost his way in forest. He reached a palace and entered in it because the door was open. There he found delicious food and comfortable bed for sleeping. Next day, in morning, he found new dress to wear and he got happy. He saw white roses in garden. When he tried to pluck them for his beloved daughter then a giant appeared. He was very angry but he forgave him with the bet that next month he would bring his beloved daughter. The merchant got disturbed. He reached home and shared his experience of giant with Beauty who asked him to keep his promise in every condition. Next month, merchant went to palace with his beloved daughter and found Beast very happy on their arrival. Then beast asked merchant to leave and Beauty remained alone with Beast who kept her with great love, respect and care. One day, Beauty saw her father very ill in her dream. She asked permission from Beast to visit her father and he granted permission with a ring that whenever she wanted to return then she will rub this ring on her table. Her father got recovered on her return but after few days, she imagined of Beast dying due to loneliness. She went to Beast and expressed her love and wishes to marry him. Suddenly a light flashed and Beast turned into a handsome prince. He told her of a spell of wicked fairy due to which he turned into a beast. Thus Beauty and the Prince got married and lived happily.

Thematic Analysis of Story Beauty and the Beast

The storybook *Beauty and the Beast* highlights an important theme regarding gender representations that is as follows:

Concept of Patriarchy

Beauty and the Beast is a great story that shows an important theme through the specific use of gender lexicalization. The story portrays a merchant family and supernatural element in form of Beast. The story highlights an important fact that shows in human worlds as well as in supernatural world, patriarchy plays an important role and women are treated dependent and passive. As the story indicates:

“I shall not harm her, said the Beast. But you must leave now.” (Ayton, 2019, p.31)

The textual line shows the interaction of Beast with Beauty’s father to leave Beauty at palace. This shows patriarchal pressures upon Beauty who is compelled to live with Giant to fulfill his father’s promise.

Women Portrayed as Witches

The present story shows female gender in role of witch as Beast says that a fairy turned him into Beast:

“Long ago, a wicked fairy turned me into a Beast.” (Ayton, 2019, p.32)

Critical Analysis of Beauty and the Beast

For critical discourse analysis of story, Fairclough’s three dimensional models have been adopted that shows the following three dimensions:

Textual Analysis - Description of Text

The text of story Beauty and the Beast show narration in past tense (e.g; “Once, long ago, a rich merchant lost his all fortune.” etc.). (Ayton, 2019, p.31) The present tense highlights actions of merchant and Beast through declarative sentence structures (e.g. “I gave you food, and a bed, and new clothes.” etc.). (Ayton, 2019, p.32) The following lexical items have been highlighted to focus on phenomenon of gender representations:

Generic Pronouns	Verbs
He	Turned
She	Promise
He	Gave

Interpretation (Discourse Practice)

The story of Beauty and the Beast highlights gender representations as the Beast has been shown as strong and clever male character and does efforts to convince human beings to achieve his own purpose of turning into original shape.

Explanation (Social Practice)

Children’s fantasy fictions represent gender differences such as the selected storybook has emphasized the masculine gender through grand actions of Beast. The power circulates between merchant and Beast that shows only male characters can exercise it. Both the merchant and Beast focus on Beauty and have been shown as independent and active members of society. This behavior inculcates the idea in male children that they should be strong and independent because they only can exercise power in society.

Semiological Discourse Analysis of Beauty and the Beast

For semiological discourse analysis of story *Beauty and the Beast*, Barthes’s model has been applied that shows the following three dimensions:

Linguistic Level

This is the first level of semiological discourse analysis that focuses on semiotic texts present in the story. As the following picture tells us about three daughters of merchant who have different natures and act independently. There has been shown no independent female character only the male gender has been given

importance and has been portrayed as active and independent members of society.

The image shows a beautiful girl named as Beauty who is good natured and kind towards her father. It shows beauty concept attached with male gender.



Iconic Level

The second level of semiological discourse analysis focuses on role of sign system in society. As the following pictures from story indicates the gender representations. The picture of Beauty with Beast shows their love relationship and role of magic. First Beauty was compelled to live with Beast but later that compulsion turned into love. The Beast has been shown as strong, active and powerful. As the image shows:

The picture shows strong male gender as giant and weak female gender in his hands.



Level of Signification

The third level of Barthes's model shows sign system in terms of signifier and signified. As the following picture indicates love relation between Beauty and Beast:

The image shows sincerity of female gender as the girl Beauty loves giant irrespective of his arrogant nature.



In the pictures, level of signification shows the role of signifier and signified. The signifiers are Beast and Beauty and signified highlights power and love. Power play exercises between masculine genders.

Signifier	Signified
Beauty	Love
Beast	Power

Focused Group Discussions

For the focused group discussions about this story, Kruger (2000) model has been applied. The researcher introduced story between two groups for discussions and found the following results:

Linguist Group	Non-Linguist Group
<p>Words: Gender representations: male as powerful, Trickery, magic, violent and dominant, female as daughter as obedient lady, weak and submissive beings, Power play, Hegemonic behaviors etc.</p>	<p>Words: Male Characters are powerful, Authoritative mood, possessive nature of men, and dominant role of male gender.</p>
<p>Themes: Role of Patriarchy Men as powerful and independent Female as witches</p>	<p>Themes: Male as powerful characters Female characters highlight weakness and dependency.</p>

The focused group discussion proved effective as the responses from two groups dominated the idea of gender representations.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section describes findings of present research study to make conclusions more comprehensible and effective.

Pakistan as a patriarchal society highlight gender differences which are practiced both inside and outside of homes. Men are treated as superior, active, independent and dominant characters whereas women are considered inferior, passive and dependent characters. Women are often subjugated and marginalized in different social setups. Children’s fantasy fictions portray both men and women either as subjugated beings or bold characters. The present study critically analyzes children story books and reveals important considerations about gender representations. The story books include specific linguistic items that highlight the phenomenon of gender representations. Through story books’ discourses, it has been observed that men are portrayed as saviors.

They are active and independent whereas women are portrayed as weak, passive and submissive human beings. They highlight domesticity. Women are considered to be ready to cope with every difficult situation and in this manner they are asked to maintain family honor, reputation and blood relationships. They never lose courage and are always active to compromise or sacrifice in hard circumstances which show that they are not passive characters. The present

study acknowledges women strength and appreciates them as they are strong enough to compromise in different circumstances with firm determination in God. So reversed gender roles have been highlighted through gender representations. A gender stereotype is a summed up view or bias about certain traits of both male and female associated by people in patriarchal societies. Gender stereotypes are negative in their nature when they confine men and women capabilities by adversely affecting their lives. Destructive generalizations about gender stereotypes reveal negativity such as women are silly or women are nurturing. The present study focuses on gender representations through extensive study of story books’ discourses. To carry out effective research study, language items have been analyzed through linguistic and semiotic means to explore gender representations. The present study includes critical analysis of fifteen story books. All the fifteen stories exhibit linguistic and semantic features that show representations of both men and women. These linguistic features are as follows:

Use of Gender Specific Pronouns

A pronoun is defined as a word used instead of a noun. Pronouns have various kinds. The present research study focuses on ‘Personal Pronouns.’ The selected stories include gender specific pronouns such as ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘you’, ‘I’ etc. In the analysis of stories, it has been observed that men mostly talk in pronouns ‘I, me, mine’ whereas women talk in ‘we, us, our’ etc.

First Person Pronoun	Second Person Pronoun	Third Person Pronoun
I	You	He, his, him, himself
Me	Your	She, her, herself
My	Yourself	It, its etc.

Use of Verbs

Verbs denote actions and are important parts of speech that describe actions of both men and women in patriarchal societies. The present study analyzes different types of verbs that highlight mostly independent actions of men in order to oppress women. Through the study of verbs used in stories, men and women lives have been analyzed that how they treat one another in patriarchal societies. Women have been seen mostly as domestic ladies, passive and dependent. Verbs reveal identity of both men and women. For example, the following verbs have been used in stories:

Verbs
 Lived, left, make, decided, heard, jumped, wept, cried, laughed, walked, found, roared, run, like, asked, go, fell, came, eat, put, believe, gave, die etc.

Reversed Gender Roles

The current study fundamentally interprets various characters and feature linguistic and semiotic changes with the passage of time. The selected children story books has demonstrated the portrayal of strong vs. weak, elite vs poor, oppressors vs. abused and oppressed so on. Through discourse structures, individuals practice power and control on each other. Through the critical analysis of selected stories, it has been observed that in many conditions, men are incredible in patriarchal social setups. They exercise power on subjugated women. Men are allowed to practice their power on powerless women. They avail freedom in different circumstances just because they are active and independent human beings. They are powerful while women are viewed as domestic ladies. In some situations, men are demonstrated as saviors whereas women are depicted as witches. The close study of stories reveals role of traditions and customs deciding women fates. It has been observed that men are free to make decisions about their lives. They have no compulsion to follow strict family customs. It is the woman who is sacrificed on behalf of customs and strict family traditions.

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