

Discourse Analysis in Selected Articles of Saudi Women's Empowerment

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ABSTRACT: *In Saudi Arabia, women receive genuine appreciation for their inherent high qualities, thus being instrumental in bringing change in the way women behave in the eyes of the public. The data collections are selected articles about agreeing Saudi women to be members of the Shoura Council for the first time on January 11, 2013. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, delivered a momentous decree to give the opportunity for Saudi women to exercise their talents as effectively as their male counterparts and to go out of their comfort zones, away from the luxuries of their homes, trying to earn a living and carve their names in their respective careers. Cohesive devices of lexical cohesion and beyond cohesion of Salkie's (1995) are used for the data analysis. The findings show that by using lexical and beyond cohesion, Saudi women's empowerment is served to transform their lives for the better and elevate them to a higher status to showcase their great potential.*

KEYWORDS: discourse analysis; lexical cohesion; beyond cohesion; Shoura council

INTRODUCTION

The monumental declaration of King Abdullah, in which he acknowledges the great potential and capabilities of Saudi women in nation-building, serves to transform their lives for the better. It also comes in response to women's clamor for their right to vote, and consequently, their inclusion in the Shoura Council (Parliament). Their intentions and demands are by themselves clear and legitimate as well. It is a bold step towards desired change and immediate resolution where the lives of Saudi women are elevated to a higher status to showcase their great potential. The fact that the king has empowered the women to run and vote to become members of the Shoura Council is a sign that he acknowledges the importance of women in the community and society and as an equal partner with men in nation building. Even though the allotted number of seats for women in the Council is not equal to that of men, the most important thing is that their representation will signal a new beginning when women's voices will be heard.

It has been noted that women in the past, during the time of Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon him), have proven their worth in a male dominated profession. So the King believes there is no reason not to give them the opportunity to exercise their Allah-given talents.

Thus, it is of great interest that the researcher has chosen as a perfect subject the publicized relevant discourses as well as transcripts of articles relevant to the enlightening, encouraging, and reaching out to transform lives, particularly those addressed to Saudi women's empowerment in the kingdom. The researcher is one of the discourse analysts who is "interested in the way discourse (re)produces social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse" (Van Dijk, 2009, 63). Throughout the analysis, the widespread gender gap is eliminated, and "the new era has ushered in a paradigm shift that has beckoned a rising women's empowerment process" (Varshney, 2019, 159).

Significance of The Study

In discourse analysis, there is no absoluteness theory in the application of a text. There are many theories that could be chosen as the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995) from the already established Grice's theory (1997) co-operative principle, and that there is a tendency to abuse with its broad coverage, but then with the relevance theory, it may just serve as an additional welcome development since it is also logical and will serve its purpose. Furthermore, Levinson (1983) is of the opinion that, "of all the issues in the general theory of language usage, speech act theory has probably aroused the widest interest" (226).

When delivering discourse, whether spoken or written, people tend to be in the transmitting mode, trying to impart some logic, beliefs, or even exhortation to an audience or reader who may or may not be receptive and appreciative of the ideas presented there. Nevertheless, the speaker bears social responsibility for whatever utterance he or she imparts, as it has a long-lasting effect and may impressively impact the lives of listeners.

When listening to a speaker's utterances or reading a writer's article in a magazine, we have more or less an idea of what facts the communicator wants us to digest. First of all, we should have established background knowledge and identified the context to be able to comprehend whether to believe or doubt the sincerity, which is our prerogative.

Therefore, it is along this line, as the researcher sees it, that the featured articles concerning texts and discourses have found their rightful place herewith in this study on the subject of text and discourse analysis, and most of the linguistic students will benefit from it. As a discourse analysts, the researcher will process every real-world context deem relevant and worth reading.

Objectives of the Study

The point of contention is how the researcher will interpret and show the effective cohesive tools in analyzing the texts in a meaningful way.

Therefore, the researcher will consider:

1. To identify the lexical cohesive tools in the selected articles.
2. To apply the selected articles at larger patterns, i.e., beyond cohesion theory of Salkie (1995).

Questions of the Study

In this analysis, the researcher will tackle the following queries:

1. What are the lexical cohesive tools used in the selected articles?
2. Does Salkie's (1995) theory of beyond cohesion applicable in analyzing the articles?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of discourse analysis covers text and context analysis. The term 'text' could be limited to mean only written language, while 'discourse' is limited to spoken language. However, many authors on discourse analysis have recently proposed that these terms be used without restrictions, stating that they could be interchangeably used depending on preference and on a case-by-case basis where one term is more appropriate to use than the other. So it also means that both terms can be used alongside each other, though for the sake of consistency, the use of just one of the terms will suffice.

Introducing discourse analysis, Alba-Juez (2009) notes that "modern linguistics has introduced a concept of *text* that includes every type of utterance; therefore, a text may be a magazine article, a television interview, a conversation or a cooking recipe, just to give a few examples" (6).

Applied linguistics is another important discipline to study while dealing with discourse analysis. Schmitt and Celce-Murcia (2010) briefly describe it as "using what we know about (a) language, (b) how it is learned, and (c) how it is used, in order to achieve some purpose or solve some problems in the real world" (1).

Pragmatics is as important as giving ample space to applied linguistics in the aspect of philosophy discipline. Pragmatics has been defined in linguistics in many ways, depending on the multiple purposes and circumstances to which it could be ascribed. Spencer-Oatey and Zegarac (2010) conclude, based on Morris' (1938) definition, that "pragmatics is concerned not with language as a system or product *per se*, but rather with the interrelationship between language form, (communicated) messages, and language users" (70). Fairclough (2013) emphasizes the significant role of language and power. This role is demonstrated when language users' ideologies are conveyed in discourse, "consent is fulfilled, and practices, values, and meanings are taught and learnt" (cited in Alkhalil, 2018, 17).

Austin (1962) noted that everyday language declarative sentences are not used with any intention of making true or false statements. He has labeled them performatives and contrasted them to statements, assertions, and utterances as constatives (cited in Levinson, 1983: 228-9). On the basis of the different ways in which a performative can fail to come off, Austin (1962) has produced a typology of felicity conditions which performatives must meet if they are to succeed. In uttering sentences, a person is also doing or performing specific actions. According to Searle (1969), in saying something, one is performing three different kinds of acts that are simultaneously performed; locutions, illocutionary force, and perlocutionary force.

From the different categories of performatives, the researcher claims that the declarative form of speech acts is the most appropriate to use in the analysis. However, all the other forms of representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives, are also useful since they are real and abound in many kinds of discourses that are happening in everyday life. In any discourse, it could be a mixture or combination of some forms of speech acts depending on the circumstances and context and on whom and where the speaker attributes something to or makes inferences without necessarily implying anything. Texts are sometimes coherent because the information in them are organized in a certain style. Thus, this topic on discourse analysis must conform or satisfy the following seven criteria in defining text as a communicative event, as presented in a broader view by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), which are: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Based on the information found in the workbook of Salkie (1995), the researcher finds it by far the most fitting source reference to pattern the discourse analysis. Therefore, she should be focusing on lexical cohesion, though its application in the discourse analysis will be sufficient enough to understand the motive.

Texts that are coherent are considered complete and can stand alone. Another thing that makes texts coherent is the way the words in the texts are presented. Assuming that the texts consist of three sentences, there is a key word in the 3rd sentence that refers back to the same key word in the previous or 2nd sentence.

The following cohesive devices are, to a large extent, taken from Salkie's (1995) workbook. According to him, cohesive devices "are only one factor in making a text coherent, but they are a good place to start the study of text and discourse because they are quite easy to identify. Just as important in making text coherent are the intentions, expectations, and background knowledge of the text producer (the speaker or writer) and the text receiver (the hearer or reader)" (XI). For the sake of analysis, cohesive devices are grouped into the following two parts, which shall be the main basis for the method of analysis and its application.

Part I: Lexical Cohesion

In his book, Salkie explains different lexical cohesive devices such as: word repetition; using synonyms; superordinates; opposites; related words; substitutes; ellipsis; reference words; and connectives. The researcher will use some of these lexical cohesion tools as they appear in the articles.

Part II: Beyond Cohesion (Larger Patterns)

Salkie (1995) identifies *Beyond Cohesion* or *Larger Patterns* and he explains it as the way we “find our way round the information in a text. One such pattern is BACKGROUND – PROBLEM – SOLUTION – EVALUATION” (91).

This study is designed to lead highlights into a deeper and higher understanding of the substance messages in the selected articles.

APPLICATION: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Here are some of the important notes to consider prior to reading the analysis and commendations that have been made on the subject:

- The surrounding incident or occasion when and where the conversation or discourse actually happened is included to provide a background to at least comprehend the relevance of the message from the context it is taken. It is very important to clearly establish the context since without it, there will be real text to work on and we cannot be certain how to treat fairly rather than accurately the subject matter or be taken out of context.
- The articles are copied in their entirety ‘word for word’ or ‘word by word’ as published to avoid leaving out any text or texts that may be important to the topic. Therefore, paraphrasing or even shortcuts are deliberately avoided in each featured article so as not to misquote or spoil the originality of the news.
- It is worthy to note that in all the analysis done here for the articles, there is a common denominator shared by each article; that there is always a need to read between the lines and above the sentence, i.e., *beyond cohesion, which falls under larger patterns*, is very evident and the most important part to justify and satisfy ourselves on how to comprehend the implied messages. Aside from the fact that almost all areas of discipline are utilized under larger patterns, beyond cohesion falls under larger patterns as the method used to provide discourse analysts a freedom to express comprehensive and honest views on the subject.

Article 1: Women in Shoura

Posted by Samar Fatany

Sep 30, 2011

Excerpts:

“King Abdullah rejected any marginalization of women in any domain ... He said: *All people know the role of women in the annals of Islam, and their positions cannot be marginalized.* ... King Abdullah recognized the need to modernize and spoke against those who oppose progressive thinking and are reluctant to give women their due rights. ... He said: *Balanced*

modernization in line with Islamic values, which preserve rights, is an important requirement in an era with no place for the weak and people with indecisiveness. ... He said: My brothers and sisters, you have your own rights according to Islamic law to achieve your goals with pride and dignity. It is our right to seek your opinion and advice according to Shariah guidelines and the fundamentals of religion, and those who stay away from these guidelines are arrogant people, and they have to bear the responsibility for their actions. ”

Lexical Cohesion: Reference Words

According to Salkie (1995), reference words are words that do not have meaning in their own right. Though we can just rely on the news details to understand the message, there are still some hidden meanings left for us to analyze as discourse analysts in particular and our readers in general.

'Islamic values' refer to our rights according to Islamic law; 'people's rights' that they are able to voice their opinion and advice when sought for by the king; 'King's right' refers to the king's right to search for opinion and guidance according to Shariah rules; and 'important requirement' refers to an era of balanced modernization in line with Islamic values.

Beyond Cohesion: Larger Patterns

Background: 3rd year inauguration of the Shoura Council's 5th session

Problem: marginalization of women in any domain

Solution: rejection of any marginalization

Evaluation: recognition of the need to modernize in line with Islamic values

As the king speaks, it is to be heard, understood, and taken literally. In order to hear the king, one must have a strong will and use all of one's heart and mind to discern his voice. One must make a strong effort to hear by beginning with self-scrutiny, 'What does the king require of me?' It is by hearing that we can be obedient. We must say that, as an individual, we try to formulate our own personal beliefs. It is our part now to discern, even our right to doubt, question, or challenge. At that point, we can read carefully and see the king's sincerity and righteousness in his words.

Nowadays, there are many professional and educated women in the kingdom who are highly capable and qualified to handle sensitive positions in the government. Gone are the days when women were only seen and treated as domestic partners charged with raising a family and rearing children at home. They have been taught and trained to be passive or submissive to their husbands, and have not been given the chance to excel and showcase their talents and abilities.

We could say the decision is a sign of the times, when all else is into modernization and going global. Therefore, from here on, since the declaration has been made by the king, women will no longer be marginalized but expected to lead and play a major role in society. Varshney (2019) says that "their presence in various public spheres and on social media is highly visible today.

The government's recent reforms have undisputedly catalyzed their foray into the workforce; however, effective integration is still a significant challenge" (159). Ultimately, Saudi women will contribute largely to the development and well-being of the Saudi women population, particularly the younger generation, who will be inspired to follow in their footsteps.

Article 2: A Dream Comes True for the other Half

By Rima Al-Mukhtar

Published: Sep 25, 2011

Excerpts: (Note: Now, let's hear and read from some of the notable women about their comments, and try to analyze and discern what they have said.)

"Now these dreams have turned to reality after the king's decision to empower women," said Suhalia Zain Al-Abideen. *"... Saudi women are now qualified to be in leading positions, and I believe that it is one of the imperatives to achieve balance in our society and community."*

"The Shoura Council is crippled by having only men's opinions. After this decision, the Shoura can walk on both legs because it has both sides represented. I hope that the number of women who will be appointed to the Shoura Council will be the same as men," Amira Kashgari said.

Naila Attar...*"Our campaign calls for the right to be hired in the municipality in the latest round at least ... We demanded that women hold at least three chairs in their local municipal council. Even if a woman did not win in the election, she still has the right to work for the municipality like men. We already have an awareness plan to educate women about the municipal council and the elections."*

Lexical Cohesion: Word Repetition

We will find key words are usually repeated to serve their purpose, as we tend to pay more attention when reading exactly the same words in sequence or appearing consecutively in the text. The speaker or writer in this instance is trying to assert something as true or up to something, which could be for the benefit of the addressee or in general, a way of showing approval for newfound empowerment. In some instances, we may be accused of redundancy but not of expressing matters of utmost importance that preconditioning is necessary. We repeat key words in the hope that by doing so, we will gain acceptance into believing that what is spoken or written about the subject is urgently importance.

The words or the clause 'king's decision' and 'this decision' in the 1st and 2nd excerpt are repeated. It is used to emphasize granting women powerful political and human rights. While the words or clause 'Saudi women' appear in the 2nd and 3rd ones consecutively, they aim at achieving familiarity with the subject. The repeated words such as these coming from the women's leader activists just mean acknowledging the significant role to be played by Saudi women, while the king is apparently looking after their general welfare in the long term. Thus, for these two important words in this text, we would expect the text to repeat them more than

once. Further, if these words were not repeated, the text would make little overall sense. Let us say, for instance, if instead of repeating the same words, another quite different word or even just a related word is used in their stead, the unity of the text would disappear and the impact on the reader would be diminished.

Lexical Cohesion: Using Synonyms

There are words that have similar meanings though they are really not identical in essence. Further, there are words that are close or very near in meaning that we can also consider as synonyms.

The word 'empower' in the 1st sentence and the word 'imperatives' in the 3rd one are not the same, though they relate to each other, so we consider them synonyms. There is even an important phrase made by combining these two words, the 'empowered imperative' given its broader meaning. One is not complete without the other, so both go hand in hand. The two words, particularly *imperatives*, refer to empowerment for a command or control. Empowerment is a product of motivation; more specifically, it stems from individual expectations of excellence, exigency, and effectiveness. To continuously improve, progress, and be successful, it is imperative to nurture, develop, enable, allow, and demand the use of reason. Objective reasoning takes practice and effort. It is not always easy or popular, but it is incredibly empowering. Thus, it is logical to say that empowerment is imperative and applicable, particularly to those who embrace progressive thinking.

Beyond Cohesion: Larger Patterns

Background: notable women from different walks of life, in their respective fields

Problem: representation of both men and women at the Shoura Council

Solution: empowerment of women

Evaluation: before, it was just a dream, but now it's a reality

It is really a dream that came true when the King finally sided in favor of the demands of a group of women who have campaigned for their rights since the early months of 2007, that they are acceptable to join in the Shoura Council, among other demands.

The women have hailed the King's decision. They see hope for the future. This was made possible by King Abdullah. It is overwhelming, and we just hope with his decision that women are happy on their own, exercising their newfound rights and freedom.

We can see now the power of words and of what the spoken language can do to people, particularly the women who are the direct beneficiaries. Their lives will eventually be transformed with high hopes that they will be motivated and challenged to endure, strive and achieve what is expected of them.

CONCLUSION

Discourse analysis is such a broad subject and provides a great venue to process or interpret what the speaker wants to emphasize, either directly or impliedly. This does not mean merely understanding, but requires deeper reflection or discernment about the text is all about. We have to consider that due to the large scope or coverage of the topics involved, we can only be selective and partial in the discourse analysis as the situation calls for and circumstances so warrant. If there is one thing of great significance after all the research being conducted, it is that some common misconceptions, wrong notions, and connotations about the usage of language as a means of communication are all cleared and understood to mean that, as wide as the universe and horizon, we have a great hurdle to overcome.

Another important thing in this study is that, as discourse analysts, we cannot criticize nor question the words used in the texts, but must read and see text coherence to be able to grasp the meaning. It is the speaker or writer's choice of words, and this is everyone's discretion, rights, and privilege as long as they are talking about 'sociocultural approved' ideas, and most of all, they are mature people and responsible for their utterances. For example, women's right to drive is one of the topics which have fallen under sociocultural practice level, as claimed by Alharbi (2016). He indicates that "the controversial struggle about the right to drive [is] situated in its broader sociocultural context, in which the complexity of the sociocultural practice of Saudi society [is] revealed" (i).

Based on the analysis of the researcher, you will notice commonality in each article in beyond cohesion – the larger patterns which portrays. The analyst has to learn to comprehend or analyze discourse messages to understand why the usage of such ambiguous and vague words is at times acceptable instead of the more appropriate explicit words, thus serving its purpose.

The King is highly motivated by his desire to transform the lives of women for the better. His kind and charitable words would inevitably be connected with the minds of the unfortunates who will eventually benefit from his declarations. While the King sows the seeds of joy, admiration, or desire, there are obstacles along the road. Those hardliners or some sectors that are not amenable to change will try to sow the seeds of terror. So be it, but let the public, the ever willing spectators in this beautiful drama of life, draw their strength and inspiration from the King. It is given that it is of no use regretting things that cannot be changed. Nevertheless, change in this world is constant. According to the researcher's belief, she must say that the King's decision intends to bring about transformation relevant and will have a long-term life changing effect.

Transformation can be a slow and painful process at times. However, we should never give up clamoring if it leads to transformation for the betterment of the human race. In addition, this

could be possible, as we have said, by setting good examples, with wise decisions and good words emanating from our rulers or leaders. It is about time to change for the better.

We are just spectators or an audience in this beautiful drama of life as it unfolds before our very eyes. That men and women, not only in this part of the universe, should be able to co-exist in love, harmony, and respect.

Finally, this study serves us in many ways. By analyzing the selected articles, it teaches us to be vigilant about the mood of the times and the transformation it brings to our lives that corresponds with public sentiments. After just a year and a few months when the King first made some pronouncements, he finally issued on January 11, 2013 a royal decree granting women's election and participation in the Shoura Council (as published in Arab News dated Jan. 26, 2013). The decree has required a 20 % quota for women in the council, equivalent to 30 women who are then appointed to join the counselling body. Varshney (2019) claims that the "government has emphasized the paramount importance of women's role in the nation building process" (359). She also adds that one of the strategic goals in Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 is to "develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities, and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy" (365). Moreover, Saudi women prove themselves that many are "distinguished in the world, such as Princess Rima Bent Sultan Al Saud, the first woman to become an ambassador in the superpower country, USA" (Alsulami, 2019, 15).

To conclude based on all the above, there are many old and new discoveries and revelations regarding text and discourse, and more particularly about text and discourse analysis. The topic is wide-ranging and as we research more and read more, there is no end, yet we firmly believe there are still further developments that do not see print. Unless someone experiences it themselves, they can attest to the verifiability and truthfulness of the facts. Whatever we have read and studied so far only remains an abstract knowledge if not put into practice, but actually experiencing it will be an added wisdom. Thus, it would be an opportunity for everyone to better equip themselves with learning and about discourse and analysis, while we leave our intellectuals, theorists, and scholars to further discover, nurture, and expose in writing anything and everything that contributes greatly to the understanding of human socio-cultural behavior and interactions that will prove relevant and beneficial to mankind, eventually leading our steps aright.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are highly recommended ways to overcome difficulties while undertaking research work on discourse analysis:

1. It is important to understand and know the purposes, potentials, and circumstantial knowledge of both the writer/speaker and the reader/hearer of a text or an utterance. Moreover, it is

extremely important to establish context prior to doing analysis on any segment. To always bear in mind that the discourse analyst stands in the gap between the source material and the final reader of the project report. So, in preparation and during work in progress, an analyst will conduct lots of research for reference. It is advantageous that knowing deeper insights on the topic will surely provide abundant resources of material references. Even the author and main title/heading of the discourse as published form part of the context.

2. It is significant to find the new techniques in making coherent texts. Hence, we have to familiarize ourselves as discourse analysts with what those coherent patterns are as provided for by the theorists.

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