

**Structuralist and Discursive-semiotic Analysis of the
Folklore Short Story “Pearl Leaf”**

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Introduction

This research uses a discursive semiotic approach to analyze discourse systems such as the intelligent discourse system (prescriptive discourse, inductive discourse and intent-based discourse) in one of the Iranian folkloric short tales, “Pearl Leaf” [in Persian, “Barg-e Morvarid”]. The collector of the tales believes that these tales are not only attractive and simply beautiful, but also very firmly established from the perspective of principles of storytelling; they have timely excitements and ups and downs; therefore, they are comparable to today’s principles of fiction-writing (Anjavi Shirazi. 1974: eleven). This tale is selected because of its logical conflict as well as its coherent structure. The tale is about a blind king who has three sons who are assigned with finding the pearl

leaf. It is Malek Mohammad who, after passing different stages, finds the magical object which is remedy for his father's blight; thus, he deals with the initial flaw of the tale with his heroism and restores his father's sight.

Methodology

This is a theoretical research conducted with a content analysis method using library tools. First, by a review of literature, a void in related research was identified. Then, using a discursive-semiotic approach based on Greimas' discursive-semiotic theory, the researchers tried to analyze discourse systems such as the intelligent discourse systems (prescriptive discourse, inductive discourse and intent-based discourse) in the tale "Pearl Leaf".

Discussion

Discourse systems

Greimas believes that most stories begin with a flaw and end with a contract. This contract is either between the actant and another agent in the story or between the actant and himself/herself (Abbasi and Yarmand, 2010: 150). The conflict is an action that, accompanied by the fulfillment of a plan, can cause a change in situation. After the contract, the actant needs to acquire the ability to perform the task. Then the main stage which is the process of performing the act begins. Therefore, the stages of narrative process can be shown as below (Shaeiri, 2018: 93):

Contract \longrightarrow ability \longrightarrow action \longrightarrow assessment

Greimas suggest a semiotic square in the deepest level of the text which is a place for basic and abstract concepts of the narrative; the abstract data in the deep structure which become apparent in the semiotic square appear in this level of reproductive process like pure tensions in superstructure and are called by Greimas actants or agent roles (Moein, 2003: 181). Semiotic square is composed of four words which can be imagined in four positions on the square. Collectively, these four positions result in three types of relation:

- a) contrary, which exists on the axis of contraries, between the two words on the upper part of the square (ugly and beautiful);
- b) contradictory, which is created between a contrary and its negation (beautiful and not-beautiful);
- c) implication, which is created between contrary negation and a positive word (not-beautiful and ugly).

The narrative of “Pearl Leaf” is composed of four chains of prescriptive discourse, each of which move the narrative forward in one way or another; however, there is only one main discourse in the center of this narrative around which other discourses move. The narrative is about a king who asks his sons to look for a pearl leaf to heal his eyes. Finding the value object has spiritual value for the king’s sons because the pearl leaf means healing the father’s blindness.

Conclusion

The active-prescriptive discourse can be considered effective in the progress of the narrative in “Pearl Leaf”, since without this discourse, the narrative is incomplete. The main action is instrumental in the

formation of the narrative discourses in the story because it is only Malek Mohammad's act, not his spiritual and emotional status, that can create a change in the situation and make it better. Malek Mohammad could never attain the status he deserves and inherit the throne if he did not leave the house with his brothers to make a change in the situation and find the object, wrestle with demons and achieve victory and then narrate his adventures for his father. As such, none of these changes were possible without Malek Mohammad's action. The research revealed that in order to transform the existing meaning and pass the initial crisis, the actant (Malek Mohammad) should have first negated his previous situation (his weakness) and then have gone toward a secondary situation (power) with a new meaning. The narrative process of change in the meaning in "Pearl Leaf" includes passing the stages of contract, main action (ability and action) and cognitive and practical assessment.

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