

**A Study of Representations of Women in Ten Children's Stories
by Mohammad Reza Yousefi Based on Ideational Metafunction**

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Introduction

Children's literature is an advantageous means for the emotional and social growth of children in the early years of their lives. To deliver their intended ideas and thoughts, writers of this type of literature try to use appropriate tools that are fit for the mental and cognitive growth of this age group. Various methods of representation of fictional characters are among these tools by which the writers can create interactions between the audience and various social groups. Characterization in some of these works has a distinctly ideological function and is used as a tool for expressing the writer's points of view.

Mohammad Reza Yousefi is a prominent writer of children's and adolescents' literature. For his didactic intentions, he selects his characters from different layers of society and unites this fictional element with other narrative elements such as theme, tone and point of view. Women of different age groups are among the main characters in most of his stories, and their characteristics, thoughts and actions determine the writer's attitude toward them. Women are present in the stories selected for the study in two ways: first, as pivotal and central characters who have active presence in the whole text of the story; second, as minor characters who are nevertheless instrumental in the progress of the narrative.

Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose

"Halliday's ideational metafunction" is a useful tool for studying the methods of representation of fictional characters. The aim of this research is to study the methods of representation of female characters in ten selected stories by Mohammad Reza Yousefi. Stories such as *Flowery Rug*, *Gol-ru and Gol-bu's Tale*, and *Green, Blue and Yellow* for the age groups of B and C are analyzed based on ideational metafunction.

In the present research, three points are notable in the representations of women: children's literature, the issue of gender, and ideational metafunction. No previous research has combined all the three issues; however, some researches have been conducted with similar objectives. Nojoomian and Qane' (2017) in "The Effect of Genre on the Discursive Function of Women Characters in Adolescent Novels" have used Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis to

analyze women's status in adolescent novels. Zomorrodian and colleagues (2011) in "Representations of Women's Roles in War Literature for Children from the Perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis" have shown that passive representation and even omission of female characters and active and dynamic representation of male characters in these stories can affect girls' and boys' identity formation while creating and maintaining unequal and unjust relations between men and women.

Discussion

Persuasive function is one of the functions of language which finds different manifestations in the text of each story. Studying the impact of this function on children's fiction can help us in identifying didactic tools used by the writers of this type of literature depending on the audience's age group. The combination of ideational metafunction and persuasive function can determine the personal style of each writer in the representation of fictional characters.

Yousefi's children's stories are prominent in contemporary Persian literature and show his attitude toward different classes of women. The analysis of his works reveal that he uses ideational metafunction as a tool in his stories, written in perfect harmony with Iranian culture and identity and with the aim of educating children while having a proper interaction with the environment. In these stories, women have an equal and active presence in the society as men do. Being carpet weavers, farmers, paddy farmers and pickers, these female characters are representations of noble Iranian women who can be role models for contemporary girls and women.

Dominant processes in the text of ten selected stories

Number	Participant	Dominant process	Frequency order	Examples of verbs
1	Women	Verbal / material / behavioral	Material	To say, to go, to make, to laugh
	Men	Relational / behavioral / mental	Relational	To be, to cry, to think
	children	Material / behavioral	behavioral	To play, to laugh
2	Animals	relational	Relational	To be / to become
3	Natural elements	verbal	verbal	To say, to talk
4	objects	verbal	verbal	To say, to talk

Yousefi's positive and respectful attitude toward women is evident in the way he chooses the names of the characters, the way he attributes actions, speeches and characteristic to them. This can be regarded as the writer's concern about preserving Iranian identity. Women in Yousefi's works are active, intellectual and creative characters who are present in

every social situation without regard to gender limitations. Considering the fact that Yousefi's readers are children, one can argue that this method of representation will undoubtedly influence children's attitude toward women and will reflect the high and unique status of women in Iranian culture; additionally, it will represent to the audience a proper picture of women who are vital in the promotion of Iranian culture and preserving its values.

Conclusion

In most stories by Yousefi, women are main characters and introduced by their actions, dialogues and specific characteristics. The function of small girls, girl students, mothers and grandmothers in these stories is always ideological and didactic. The actions and the emotional and mental characteristics of these characters are depicted in a way as to have positive connotations and persuade the audience to accept and accompany the characters. Material processes are Yousefi's main tool for representing women as active and equal in the structure of the narrative. These processes have remarkable persuasive functions and make the audience accompany the main characters and their actions and add to the realistic aspects of the story.

The researchers hope that this research and similar researches help identify and understand the works of similar writers so that children as social capitals gain an understanding of women and men's relationship as equal and free of gender discriminations.

Keywords: Halliday, ideational metafunction, children's literature, adolescent fiction, Mohammad Reza Yousefi.

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