

**Reproduction of Traditional Ideas of Gender Discourse in  
Children and Adolescents' Writings**

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**Introduction**

Since 1989, in addition to its cultural and literary content, *The Speaking Doll* magazine has published manuscripts for children and adolescents in the form of stories and essays on specific topics. In these writings, child readers have appeared as authors. Various aspects of these texts can be analyzed. In the present study, we will analyze how children and adolescents reflect their gender identity in their narratives and stories. Using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach, children's autobiographical texts at three levels of description, interpretation and explanation have been studied and analyzed to show how their gender identity is represented.

Gender identity is the most important part of any person's identity. The gender that people are born with creates characteristics and traits for them from the very beginning and affects all aspects of their lives. Children gain their gender identity around the age of three, and

especially in the final years of childhood, they begin to identify with their same-sex parent. The boy considers a male role model and the girl considers a female role model. By reinforcing these patterns, they gradually acquire gender roles. Gender roles are a set of behaviors that any society, based on its definition of “masculinity” and “femininity”, deems appropriate for people of that gender.

In recent years, there have been many changes in attitudes toward gender and gender roles in Iranian society and family. Therefore, in view of these changes and distancing from the traditional approach of the patriarchal family, it seems necessary to examine the extent of change in the perceptions of children and adolescents of their genders.

### **Methodology**

In this research, using Norman Fairclough’s theories and critical analysis of discourse, stories and writings (essays) of children and adolescents that have been published in *The Speaking Doll* magazine from 2001 to 2009 have been reviewed. In addition to critical discourse analysis, some sociological and psychological theories about gender have been used. The following questions have been the focus of the study:

1. What are the most prominent gender characteristics that each child or adolescent writer has described for themselves?
2. What is the gender role of children and adolescents in these stories?
3. To what extent are the sentences, phrases and conversations of the characters in the stories influenced by gender stereotypes?
4. What are the attitudes of children and adolescents towards those of the same and the opposite gender in these stories?

5. Given the vast changes that have taken place in the institution of the Iranian family in today's world, what is the reaction of children in their writings to gender stereotypes in the last two decades?

According to the qualitative approach of the work, to answer these questions, we selected and reviewed 56 texts written by children and adolescents aged 7 to 17 using purposive sampling, of which 40 were stories and 16 essays. These samples, selected from texts written by children and adolescents in the two decades of 2000 (20 cases) and 2010 (36 cases), each of them reflected the gender identity of their authors. It should be noted no study has been done so far on children's writings in Iran.

### **Discussion**

In the stories of children and adolescents, the narratives of boys are often centered on their own gender, and in few cases, such as the subject of the essay, they comment on girls. But this is not the case with girls. Girls write texts in which the main characters and protagonists are boys. In addition to this, we frequently encounter texts written by girls who wish to become boys.

In addition, in examining the important gender stereotypes that have been reflected in the writings of children and adolescents, we found that the extent and manner in which female gender stereotypes are represented has changed significantly in the two decades of 2000 and 2010. In the 2000s, women are mostly represented by the cliché of the housewife, and then, by other clichés such as the victim and the beautiful woman. But in the 2010s, women are dramatically less represented in the stereotype of the housewife, and most representations

of women were beautiful and passive woman. Also, for the cliché of submissive woman which was reflected in several texts in the 2000s, no examples were found in the texts studied in the 2010s.

In the case of male gender stereotypes, men are mostly represented by the stereotype of violent man in the 2000s, but the use of this stereotype sharply declines in 2010s. The stereotypes of man in the outside world, the strong man and the smart man have been the most frequent in the 2000's. Also in the 2010's, the stereotypes of man in the outside world, the violent man and the working man are used most frequently. In addition, we encountered 7 cases of breaking or questioning a particular gender stereotype in the texts of the 2010s, while we found only one such case in the texts of the 2000s.

It should be noted that these changes are related to a part of a story or narrative, and the child or adolescent author represents the traditional discourse of gender in other parts of his / her writing. In addition to what has been said, other results have been obtained from the analysis of the samples examined in the text of the research. In these texts, 14 stories and narratives have compared the two genders, of which 13 or 93% of them, considered the boy as the superior sex and only one case or 7% considered the girl as the superior sex. There is no mention of equality between the two sexes.

### **Conclusion**

As a general result, it can be said that the Iranian society is moving towards modernity and we are witnessing changes in gender ideas, including changes in the gender roles of women in society, under the influence of the western discourses; however, the traditional discourse

in Iranian society also plays a role in reproducing some of the gender stereotypes and it can be well seen in the writings of children who are directly and indirectly influenced by this discourse. In other words, in the minds of children and adolescents, male and female roles are formulated separately based on the remnants of the patriarchal system.

**Keywords:** *The Speaking Doll*, gender ideas, Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough, ideology, child and adolescent writers

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