



RESEARCH PAPER

Critical Discourse Analysis of William Shakespeare's Play "Othello"

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> February 21, 2022 <b>Accepted:</b> April 29, 2022 <b>Online:</b> May 01, 2022	This article deals with William Shakespeare's play "Othello" (1603). The purpose of this study is to analyze the linguistic features of the play. The primary purpose of this paper is to examine the use of power, inequality, and dominance behind words. The most recognized research model of CDA by Fairclough (1989) has been utilized for the analysis of the play. The corpus of the play is examined by keeping in view the textual, discursive, and societal levels of text. This is a mixed-method study because the data is analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The software AntConc (version 3.5.9) was utilized for analyzing the corpus of the play. The keywords, wordlists, and concordances have been taken out. The key findings from the study are that most of the negative lexical items explain the hidden ideologies that have been going on there, for example, racism, interracial marriage, war, manipulation, etc. The positive and negative lexis also express emotions such as love, hate, jealousy, revenge, etc. Moreover, pronouns illustrate the character's identities, and found that most of the characters are self-oriented. The concordance of specific keywords helped us find out the broader implied theories that Shakespeare presented in the play "Othello." The study is limited to describing the keywords, wordlists, and concordances. Further, it is beneficial for future researchers or students to understand the significant issues of the Shakespearean period.
<b>Keywords:</b> Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Hidden Ideologies, Language of The Shakespearean Period Linguistic Features, Othello, Fairclough's Model Textual Analysis	
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Introduction

The play "Othello" is a famous tragedy written by Shakespeare in 1603. It is often called the tragedy of a single person who becomes the victim of circumstances. The plot of this play is artistically designed by Shakespeare to express the complexity of the situations. There is not a single part that relieves readers from these complicated circumstances. The language of this play contains numerous hidden ideologies and social problems of that period. This article deals with the critical discourse analysis of the language of the play "Othello." The well-known model of CDA by Fairclough (1989) has been used for analyzing the selected play. This analysis helps examine the implied ideas that have been put by the writer in the play. His use of words shares the problems of that society. Further, it investigates the features of writing in the Shakespearean period.

Critical discourse analysis includes numerous methods and tools proposed by Fowler (1991) and many other scholars. CDA examines the power behind words, inequality, social problems, universal issues, and dominance. It talks about how people use language to deliver their hidden messages. This play has not been investigated from a CDA perspective, but in this current study, it is linguistically analyzed by applying Fairclough's 3D model (1989). This model explores three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. This play is chosen for research because it has those linguistic items that explain the power and numerous kinds of human emotions. The language utilized by characters describes their identities and characteristics.

The software AntConc (version 3.5.9) has been run on the corpus of "Othello." This software has taken out the wordlists, keywords, and concordance of frequently used keywords. The rationale behind this study is the popularity of Fairclough's model (1989), and secondly, readers may understand the language of literary discourse through this study.

The study's main objective is to analyze the connection between language and ideologies. The analysis of linguistic items may be helpful for others to know Shakespeare's linguistic choices. This study is limited to analyzing lexical features, grammar, use of pronouns, positive and negative lexical items, and implied theories.

### **Literature Review**

There have been many studies conducted in CDA, and numerous discourses have been analyzed from the perspective of CDA. Different researchers also study Othello by applying other models. Auzahra and Salahat (2018) published research on Othello by Shakespeare. This study explored the language of one character Iago. It focused on his choice of words that describe other people's race, gender, and identity. This study found that Iago's language is animalistic and dehumanizing for other people (^).

A study was conducted by Mardiha (2013) on Othello to investigate the stylistics and semantic features of the text. It also explored the contrastive elements between English and Persian translation of the play Othello. It focused on the meaning of words and the author's literary style (Mardiha, 2013). Maryam (2013) carried out a study on the communicative interactions in the play Othello. She used Fairclough's systematic theory of CDA. This study explored how humans construct identities and build relationships. This research found that the play Othello contains different aspects of society. This study found that communicative, social, and cultural realities are not only existed in society but also exist in literary works (Navidi, 2013).

Rakib Uddin (2019) conducted a study on Othello. Othello is also the name of the play and the main character's name. This study investigated the two religious' faiths, Islam and Christianity of Othello. The findings demonstrated that Shakespeare and his contemporaries talked about people's religion. They wrote about the converted Christians who had Muslim backgrounds. Muslims were considered outsiders, brutal, murderers, and primitive in that era.

Ramzan and Karim (2020) conducted a study on the novel "Moth Smoke" by Mohsin Hamid. Both researchers used Fairclough's three-dimensional models (1989). This study found how people implement power over others. This study explored the

elite and lower classes through linguistic analysis. It showed the writer's choice of words for both types and how the poor are treated by the elite class (Ramzan & Khan, 2020).

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

CDA is a broader field that studies the discourses and people of a society. Dijk (1998) defines CDA as a discipline that works to analyze written or spoken texts. It explores all the power relationships, abuse of power, inequality, and biases in the discourse. It also investigates how social, political, and historical backgrounds play a role in the texts (Dijk, 1998).

According to Fairclough (1993), CDA describes the texts' textual features, which explore the causes of power, inequality, and dominance. It discusses the blurred reasons for the discursive implementation of events, readers, and broad social and cultural groups. It investigates how power and hidden theories are embedded in the discourse. The main aim of CDA is to explore the power and how people save themselves from the abuse of power. Thus, CDA investigates all types of texts and explores different issues.

### **Research Framework**

Fairclough is a renowned person in critical discourse analysis who presented a model (1989). This model explores the relationships between language, power, and ideologies. Fairclough considers that language is like a social practice in society (Fairclough, 1992).

What was the reason behind the idea of Fairclough's model (1989)? He observed that critical linguistics could not explore the interpretation made by people. The interpretations of people and the researcher's interpretations was the central notion of CL. One more thing, CL just explored the grammatical and linguistic features of the texts. On the other hand, Fairclough was not agreed at this point. He explained that inter-textuality matters a lot during the analysis of the text (Fairclough, 1995a). That's why he presented his model (1989) to explore further dimensions of the text. This model has three major dimensions, and figure one contains their names.

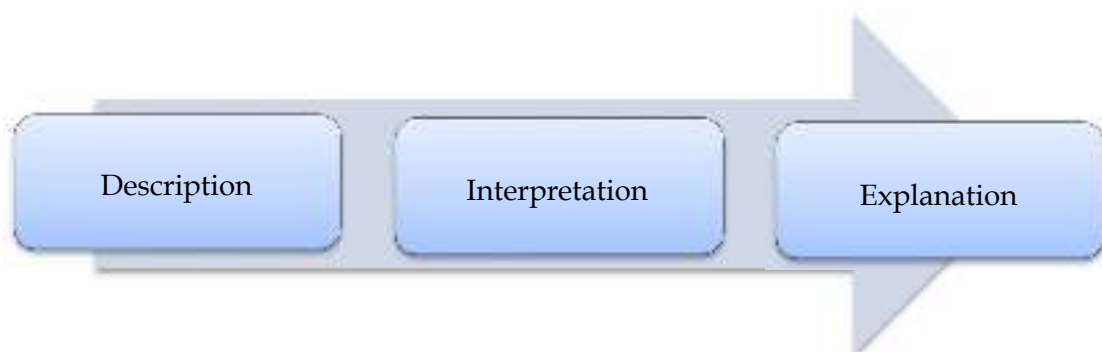


Figure 1 Fairclough Textual Analysis Stages (1989)

### **Description Stage**

The description stage is the first stage that deals with the text's description. Fairclough (1995) explains that textual analysis means linguistic analysis. This stage

involves the production, structure, and organization of the text. Linguistic analysis is often defined as the analysis of sounds, word formation, semantics, syntax, context, cohesion, and coherence above the sentence level (Fairclough, 1995a). What are the main steps of the description stage? The main steps are four, and figure one represents them.

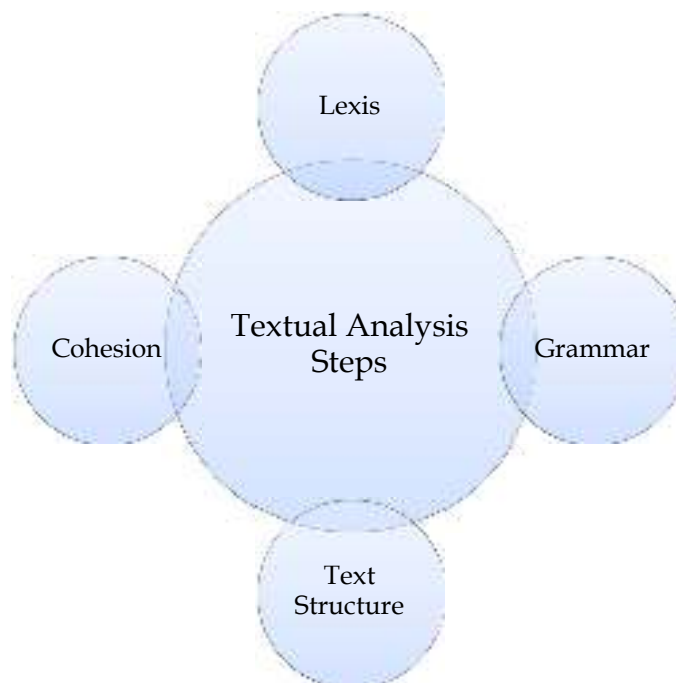


Figure 2 Fairclough's Textual Analysis Steps (1992)

### Interpretation of the Text

After describing the features of a text, the interpretation becomes a necessary step. Interpretation of a text is the second dimension of Fairclough's model (1989). It is also pertinent to know the text's actual interpretation. This stage deals with the analysis of the text by people. It involves how people interpret a text. Although it is a fact that the interpretations of a text can be numerous, this stage checks the researcher's interpretation of a particular discourse.

Two main things have been kept in mind while exploring this stage, one is the background knowledge, and the other is the experiences of a person. This stage contains the knowledge about the production and understanding of the text within two contexts. One is intertextual context, and the other is situational context. Both contexts vary in their dimensions. The intertextual context deals with the text creator and text adaptor. On the contrary, situational context defines the period, current era, and place where the text is produced. This stage also works to know people's roles and what they do. The purpose of writing is to present the rules and values. The author informs the public about the social norms. He highlights the social issues through writing. However, interpretation of the text is the best way to understand the writer's message behind the work.

## Explanation of the Text

The explanation is the last stage of Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1989). In this stage, the text is examined by keeping in view the social practice. This stage works on the social and cultural reality. This stage is important for understanding the text more clearly. It deals with three major levels of analysis. Figure three mentions these levels.

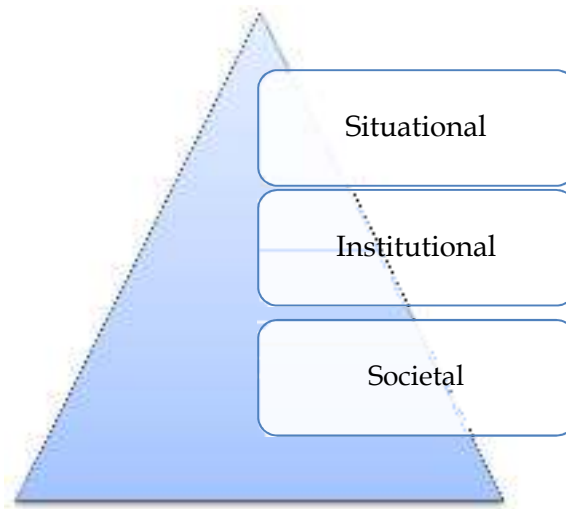


Figure 3 Three steps of Explanation by Fairclough (1995)

The situational and institutional level explains the power and relationship of power. It investigates the social context during the discourse production. It highlights what kind of social structures are involved while creating this text. The societal level explains the happenings in society. On the other hand, the institutional level describes the universal issues of the world. It deals with how broader ideologies are embedded in the text by the discourse producer.

## Material and Methods

Critical discourse analysis can be applied as a theory and a method to any discourse. The play "Othello" is analyzed by applying two domains of CDA; social practices and linguistics level. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilized in this research. This is a mixed-method study in nature. The model that has been applied for analyzing the corpus is Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1989). This model has three stages; description, interpretation, and discourse explanation. AntConc software (version 3.5.9) has been utilized in this study to analyze the data. In the qualitative method, the concordances of some specific keywords have been used. The concordance helped to know the theories behind this play production. In the quantitative approach, the corpus of the play is described by taking out the frequencies of lexical items. In the description stage, the keywords list and wordlists have been taken out through software. The corpus for the study has been collected from a website named "nosweatshakespeare.com." Then the text is converted into plain text for analysis in the software.

The corpus of the play consists of 27,940 words. The corpus for this article is the one play *Othello* by Shakespeare. This play contains five acts, and each act has been analyzed in the article. The results from the software AntConc are valid and reliable

because there are tons of studies added to this software for analyzing the corpus. Moreover, the framework used in this article is also a reliable model of CDA.

## Results and Discussion

### Data Analysis

This section includes the analysis of the play "Othello" by Shakespeare. The data is examined by exploiting the CDA model of Fairclough's (1989). Firstly, the text is described; secondly, it is interpreted, and lastly, it is explained.

### Description Stage

The first stage involves the analysis of lexis, grammar, and textual structure. These three things have been examined in this article. In this stage, positive and negative lexical items, adjectives, and pronouns have been analyzed.

### Description of Lexis

The description stage includes the analysis of the different words used in the play. There are two types of vocabulary that have been found in the play; negative and positive lexis. The language used in the play show power, social relationship, and cultures of the Shakespearean society. The writer's choice of words describes the hidden ideologies. Table one describes the negative words from the play "Othello."

**Table 1**  
**Negative lexis and negative verbs from act one of Othello**

Negative Lexical Items		
Moor	Worse	Spells
Old black ram	Beast	Hell
Thick lips	Devils	Plague
Thieves	Villain	Sooty bosom
Ruffians	Violence	Bond-slaves
Robbed for shame	Thief	Pagans
Barbary horse	Abused	Spite
Villain	Corrupted	Lascivious
Hate	Bitterness	Despised

### Description of Negative Lexical Items

These negative lexical items explain different ideologies such as racism, hate, jealousy, manipulation, and revenge. These words have illustrated the negative attitude of people toward black people. Most characters hate black people and degrade them by using negative words.

The words spoken by other characters often describe them as murderers and thieves. Brabantio repeatedly uses the words "thief, devils, barbary horse," etc. The purpose is to disrespect them. Othello is often called 'moor' and "old black ram," which shows the racist attitude of others. The table mentioned above explains the different negative lexical items.

### Positive Lexical Items

This article also contains positive words that describe the positive characters. Although evil is so much there yet, some good characters use positive words. The finding of the analysis surprised us that even nice words can also help destroy the lives of others.

**Table 2**  
Positive Lexical Items in the Play "Othello"

Positive Lexical Items			
Dear	Noble	Love	Fair
Sweet	Sensible	Good	Delicate
Gentle	Tender	Honest	Valiant
Honor	Beautiful		

The words spoken by Othello and Desdemona express the emotions of sincerity, love, and respect for each other. On the other hand, the nice words spoken by Iago destroyed others. Hence, the hidden intentions can be expressed through the analysis of the lexical items.

### Use of Adjectives

After describing the positive and negative lexical items, it is also important to explain the adjectives. These adjectives explain the writer's choices of words and how he minutely observes the human emotions and then describes them through adjectives. In this play, several adjectives have been utilized to show the intensity of the characters' feelings, emotions, and desires.

This example can be further illustrated when Iago says, "you were the best go in," it describes that he is using the superlative degree 'best' for buttering Roderigo that he is perfect for the job. Even in another setting, he uses the 'gentle' adjective for Desdemona. He wants to pretend that he gives respect to her. Moreover, the adjectives used for Desdemona are 'tender,' 'fair,' 'sweet,' and 'delicate.' The most beautiful adjectives have been utilized by Othello for expressing his emotions toward others. The adjectives used by other characters have negative intentions in their mind. The other lists and examples of adjectives have been added in Appendix A.

### Use of Pronouns

Pronouns also play an important role in any literary text. We can understand the culture of any period through literary works. In the play "Othello" various identities have been given to characters. These identities help to understand the roles and character of the people. Table one includes the pronouns and their frequencies from act one.

**Table 3**  
Use of Pronouns in the First Act of the Play "Othello"

Personal Pronouns	Frequencies	Objective Pronouns	Frequencies	Possessive Pronouns	Frequencies
I	182	Me	52	My	109
You	96	Her	47	Your	57
He	38	Him	38	His	31

She	33	Them	11	Our	15
We	23			Their	13

All the kinds of pronouns have been taken out from the five acts. The personal, objective, and possessive pronouns have been taken out with the help of AntConc software. Figure four illustrates all the examples of using pronouns.



Figure 4 Use of Pronouns in Act One Examples

This image contains different examples of using pronouns by characters. The personal pronoun 'I' existed in act one more than in the second act. Iago uses 'I' to focus on himself and wants to show superior to others. The way he gives preference to himself that even he cannot think of working on the lower job. The pronoun 'I' is also utilized by Othello. He also feels proud of his social status.

The pronoun 'you,' 'he', and 'she' is utilized by characters for talking about others. The personal pronoun 'she' is utilized most of the time for discussing Desdemona. The interesting thing in this act is that 'we' is just used 23 times. This is surprising that those people or characters were not talking about collectivism.

The writer has included the objective pronouns as part of the conversation. They have been added in the act by the author to show the position of people as objects. Line eight shows how Brabantio considers her daughter as an object.

After objective pronouns, possessive pronouns also have been taken out. They describe how much characters are possessive about things. This pronoun is used to illustrate the person's self-identity, values, choices, and characteristics. By analyzing the above examples, it is found that most of the characters in the play are self-oriented. They think about themselves and are concerned about their status. In the same way, the pronouns from the second, third, fourth, and fifth acts have been taken out. The tables are placed in the appendices along with examples. To sum up, the analysis of the description stage is completed and found numerous ideologies working behind the words.



## Interpretation

In this stage, concordance of some keywords has been taken out by using AntConc software (version 3.5.9). The concordance helps to know the implied theories that Shakespeare has embedded in the play "Othello." This stage involves highlighting the societal problems of that era. The following hidden ideologies have been taken out, and their detailed interpretations have been included in this article.

## Racism

Racism is the most prominent ideology behind the language of the play. The word 'Moor' has been analyzed in the concordance. Several lexical items show the racist attitude. Through the wording of characters, Shakespeare highlighted the issues of racism. Most white people have a racist attitude towards black people. They use such words which show their hidden intentions. Characters hate Othello because of his dark complexions or because he is a black man. Even in the current age, racial issues are so common. The figure below expresses the best examples of racist vocabulary.



Figure 5 Concordance of "Moor"

The word 'moor' is used for Othello, which means he is a black-colored man. The negative words spoken by many characters just to express hate towards black people. For example, the words "an old black ram," "barbary horse", and "lascivious moor" are used for Othello. This shows how much people hated black people. According to them, the marriage between Othello and Desdemona is impossible news. They are totally against interracial marriage. The black people are considered outsiders, wild, lustful, murderers, and brutal. Shakespeare highlighted this major issue through the play "Othello." Only language analysis can present the hidden theories behind the literary texts.

## Love

The concordance of the word 'love' has been taken out from the play. This tells us the several types of love for instance, the love for power, the love of Othello and Desdemona, and Brabantio's love for Desdemona.

LINE	TEXT
1	But myself; Heaven is my judge, not I for <b>love</b> and duty, But swearing so, for my peculiar end:
2	How I did thrive in this fair lady's <b>love</b> , And she in mine. DUKE OF VENICE: Say it,
3	go to the war, (the rites for which I <b>love</b> him are benefit me, And I a heavy interim
4	injury, I never found man that knew how to <b>love</b> himself, Ere I would say, I would drown myself
5	I would say, I would drown myself for the <b>love</b> of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity
6	advantage. Come, Desdemona: I have but an hour Of <b>love</b> , of worldly matters and direction, To spend with
7	have reach'd; for know, Iago, But that I <b>love</b> the gentle Desdemona, I would not my unhoused fro
8	Whether I in any just term am affined to <b>love</b> the Moor, I RODRIGO I would not follow him then,
9	E What would You, Desdemona? DESDEMONA That I did <b>love</b> the Moor to live with him, My downright violence
10	drown myself. IAGO If thou dost, I shall never <b>love</b> thee after, Why, thou silly gentleman! RODRIGO I
11	lited lusts, whereof I take this that I O you call <b>love</b> to be a sect or scion, RODRIGO It cannot
12	cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her <b>love</b> to the Moor,-- put money in thy purse,-- nor
13	unwornish'd tale deliver Of my whole course of <b>love</b> : what drugs, what charms, What conjuration and wh
14	. I must show out a flag and sign of <b>love</b> , which is indeed but sign, That you shall surely
15	ears, of country, credit, every thing, To fall in <b>love</b> with what she fear'd to look on! It

Figure 6 Concordance of Word 'Love'

Othello often describes his love for duty and sweet Desdemona. His actions are so pure, whether they are for the state or Desdemona. He uses polite adjectives for the beauty of her lady. Othello's acceptance of Desdemona's love is appreciated by many critics. The love expressed by Othello is true and pure. On the other hand, Brabantio is quite possessive about his daughter. Iago's love for power makes him a villainous person. He wanted to get superior roles. In the last line 15 uttered by Brabantio in which, he explains how Desdemona loves a dark-colored man.

## Hate

Hate is also a broader ideology behind all the clashes. The writer portrayed the people of that period who had a hated attitude toward others. Roderigo, a suitor of Desdemona, wanted to get her, but he could not get her. That's why he hates it so much with Othello. On the contrary, Iago wants to get a higher position but cannot get it. This is the main reason for his hate towards Othello. Both are against Othello and want to destroy his life. They become the enemy of Othello and go to tell Desdemona and Othello's marriage to Brabantio.

LINE	TEXT
1	your house, your daughter and your <b>bags</b> ! Thieves! Thieves! BRABANTIO appears above, at a window BRABANTIO W
2	is, ho! IAGO Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! Thieves! Thieves! 4 Look to your house, your daughter and
3	Brabantio, ho! IAGO Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! Thieves! Thieves! 4 Look to your house, your daur
4	AGO Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! Thieves! 4 Look to your house, your daughter and your bag
5	Look to your house, your daughter and your <b>bags</b> ! Thieves! thieves! BRABANTIO appears above, at a window BR

Figure 7 Concordance of word 'Thieves'

Only their linguistic choices help us to know the disloyalty toward Othello. Thus, hate towards Africans is also the major societal and institutional issue of that period.

## **Marriage**

Another major issue of that era is marriage in another race. Shakespeare portrayed the marriage scene between Othello and Desdemona to highlight the more significant problem of that period. Firstly, critics commented that this marriage might solve the issues of racial marriage. But the last, the murder of Desdemona by Othello increased this issue more. They considered that this horrible end of Desdemona was just the result of marriage to another race. The examples of the wording that explains this ideology have been placed in Appendixes B. (see lines 2 to 7 for understanding marriage issues).

## **Animalistic Terms**

The animalistic terms are also crucial because there are unlimited animal words used for humans. This shows the animal nature of man. The animal words are used for Othello when they call him 'barbary horse', 'Gennets for German,' 'sooty bosom,' and 'old black ram'. The character Iago's language is more feral than others.

For example, in a scene of act one, he alarms Brabantio by telling him that his grandchildren will be from the moor. One more example (S. line 11) in which Iago uses dirty and negative words for Othello. We can see how linguistic features help us understand the hidden theories behind a discourse. In short, other hidden ideologies are named as cheating, insult, power of money, manipulation, and jealousy, have been explored in this article placed in Appendix C.

## **Explanation Stage**

After analyzing the corpus of the play "Othello" in the description and interpretation stage, the explanation stage comes. As mentioned in the literature review, what this stage requires from a text. This stage includes three significant steps: situational, institutional, and societal. The analysis of the play has been conducted within these levels. This article covers the situational and societal contexts in the interpretive stage.

The institutional context is concerned with the broader issues of that era, for example, racism, war, interracial marriage, etc. There are numerous societal issues, but this study has revealed only a few. The major societal problems of the Shakespearean era were money, status, revenge, hate, slavery, jealousy, etc.

Moreover, Shakespeare is a keen observer of human emotions and feelings. We find how beautifully he manages different kinds of emotions in the drama. He plays well with human emotions such as love, hate, jealousy, and revenge. The drama is considered a unique drama for illustrating human emotions and feelings.

Inter-racial marriage in that age was a universal issue. Despite the problems, Othello and Desdemona get married. It is unbelievable to other characters how a black person can marry a white daughter. The complicated contrastive elements of the play make it more famous. The marriage of black and white people and how love turns into hate.

Moreover, Eurocentrism highlighted that African people are enslaved people, ignorant, and outsiders. They must serve their lords. Although Eurocentrism pointed

out various opinions about African people, Shakespeare's Othello breaks all these stereotypes. He is so innocent that he becomes the victim in the hand of Iago. He met this tragedy because of his loyalty, innocence, and love. Further, the play "Othello" contains animalistic language. Many characters use animal metaphors for other to dehumanize others.

Conclusively, CDA is the authentic approach for examining the hidden theories that have been incorporated into the discourses. Fairclough's model (1989) is the best model for analyzing the text to explore the issues of power, ideologies, and language. This stage met with all the fulfillment of the analysis.

## **Conclusion**

The first question of this research was regarding the linguistic features of the play "Othello"? This study found certain lexical items which describe the language of people. People use negative words for black people. The black people were considered inferior even though they worked for white people.

Previous studies have not analyzed the negative lexical items. Through the analysis of positive lexical items, this study found that positive words are used for gaining the trust of others. Sometimes they are used for buttering others, and sometimes, they are used for destroying others.

What did this study find out by analyzing the pronouns? This study found that pronouns are the builders of making identities. The personal pronouns showed the characters' subjective positions. On the other hand, objective pronouns illustrated the characters as objects.

The possessive pronouns describe how much people are possessive towards their belongings. This study found that most of the characters are self-oriented. Hence, the plan of these pronouns is that people of that era were self-centered, self-confined, and self-oriented.

The third question in this article is about how Shakespeare uses language to construct hidden ideologies. The answer to this question is that we explore several lexical items, sentences, and statements that include implicit meanings. The hidden ideologies like racism, hate, love, marriage, jealousy, manipulation, insult, cheating, animalistic terms, black magic, and the power of money have been found in this research.

The research that has been conducted by Abuzahra and Salahat (2018) was on the analysis of Iago's language. The results of this article correlate with this research. We found that Iago's language is so negative towards others through the concordances. The study by Abuzahra and Salahat (2018) also found that he uses animalistic terms to humiliate others. This article answers how the play "Othello" is described, interpreted, and explained by using Fairclough's model (1989). In the analysis section, the text is examined in all the stages. The description stage included the lexical items and their frequencies. The interpretation stage added the concordance and detailed analysis of each line of the text. The last explanation stage further discussed the macrostructure statements and hidden ideologies. In this way, the article met the need of all the research questions.

The primary aim of this article was to explore hidden ideologies through the analysis of linguistic features. In this article, it is mentioned how lexical choices help us to understand the implied meanings. The lexical choices that have been found in this article are following;

1. Positive lexical indicators
2. Negative lexical items
3. Use of adjectives
4. Use of pronouns
5. Grammatical features
6. Hidden Ideologies

These all levels of analysis have been conducted by applying the Fairclough 3D model (1989). This study perfectly showed how words contain several hidden meanings. The tables and figures have been added to know the words and their frequencies in the play. The figures contain examples from the text. The future researcher can analyze Othello by applying different models or other linguistics fields. This study will help the literature, linguistic students, and researchers comprehend the theories behind this discourse creation. Consequently, this paper met its objectives and research questions.

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