



RESEARCH PAPER**Exploring Societal Constructs through Marriage Discourses: A Critical Analysis of Jane Austen's *Emma***

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ABSTRACT

This research study presents a Critical Discourse Analysis of Jane Austen's 18th-century novel *Emma* by employing a qualitative methodological approach. Utilizing Van Dijk's (1995) Socio-cognitive model, the analysis is conducted at the Macrostructure level which allows for the interpretation of the novel's meanings and themes. The study specifically examines dialogues related to the theme of marriage by extracting the concerned excerpts from the text. Through this analysis, the research uncovers the underlying ideologies concerning marriage as presented by female authors of the period. The results indicate that Austen's portrayal of marriage reflects a societal context in which women are systematically underprivileged and subject to male dominance. This suggests that *Emma* not only offers a narrative about individual characters but also provides a broader commentary on the gender inequalities prevalent in the 18th century. The study thus contributes to the understanding of how literature can mirror and critique social realities particularly concerning women's roles within the institution of marriage.

KEYWORDS Critical Analysis, Discourse, Emma, Jane Austen, Societal Constructs

Introduction

Marriage is a close, solid bond between two people. Marriage acts as a platform for sharing and managing resources as a mutual responsibility between men and women in society and it is also regarded as a sacred union (Dhofar, 1980). According to Ellwood(1913), marriage serves as a universal and important feature of cultures because it satisfies the desire to be loved, the requirement for inspiration and social interaction, the need to feel safe and comfortable, the need for future assurance and the need to feel valued. Marriage is a bond that involves two persons with disparate skills, interests and desires. It has an impact on an individual's development and sense of fulfillment. It is a phase that occurs while a person transitions from childhood to adulthood.

The concept of marriage and gender roles in the 18th century evolved in ways that were unfavorable to women as they were given fewer opportunities in life compared to men. They got confined to their households and their husbands suppressed them after getting married. According to Grossbard-Shechtman and Neideffer (1997), women of that era preferred to remain morally upright throughout their lives. Moreover, authors of the time represented issues of their time in their writings in which the theme of marriage and gender was considered prominent. They tried to highlight them according to their ideology. Some English women in the eighteenth century started to become aware of their

oppression which sparked the beginning of the preservation of female rights and Jane Austen was one of them. She wrote frequently on themes of gender and marriage. The first novel by Jane Austen was *Emma* which was an example of her different attitude towards society and stereotypical images of women. The central themes of *Emma* were related to gender and marriage and are considered to be one of Jane Austen's most well-known works. Austen focused on women's lives in the eighteenth century and investigated with a particular emphasis on getting married which was the primary concern of women of that time. Austen included a variety of characters in her book including members of both the high and low classes.

Critical discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary field, deals with comprehensive studies of the structure, purpose and methods of speech generation, emerged from the 1960s to the middle of the 1970s as a result of significant changes in fields like anthropology, social science, cognitive science and others. The term "critical" in CDA refers to discourse that addresses hidden ideologies and forms of social control. The connection between language and ideology is represented through the written word which significantly influences societal ideas, attitudes and choices. However, the influence that authors could have on fiction has received less attention than this component for non-fiction. Friend's (2010) study shows that literature has a strong impact on how people view events and situations from the Victorian period. It suggests that the stories and themes in literature from that time can shape and influence the understanding of the social and cultural issues of the era.

Many researchers considered Jane Austen's novel *Emma* of great importance throughout history and conducted various studies by focusing on particular aspects of the novel. Such as the critical analysis of the social status and marriage of women in novels by Jane Austen (Valentinova Georgieva, 2018), the status of married and unmarried women in *Emma* (Kia, 2017), the representation of the independent woman (Szigethy, 2017), another research related to single women in *Emma* (Paz Hernández, 2015) and concerning the struggle of the main character of women by using feminism theory and the structuralism approach (Fitria, 2021). The current study has critically examined and evaluated past studies related to *Emma*. Therefore, the present research endeavors to extend the merits at an advanced level by making the overall mechanism of study comprehensive, well-organized, and well-defined as this study uses the qualitative-method approach. As far as this study is concerned no researcher focused on the Socio-Cognitive model (Van Dijk, 1995) specifically concerning the Macrostructure level to examine the ideology of Austen in *Emma* through Critical Discourse Analysis. The purpose of the present research is to investigate the ideology of a female author regarding the theme of marriage in a 19th-century novel and to analyze the way of representing the ideology in the novel.

Literature Review

A broad range of relevant literature about previous studies related to the theme of marriage and gender in English novels has provided a foundation to conduct the current study. Literature has a direct link with human life and both cannot be separated from one another as one produces the other (Bukonya & Kabira, 1994). Through literary genres, human beings comprehend the reality of the world that has occurred in the past and will continue to occur in the future in a better or worse way. Albrecht's (1956) research states that if the writer of every era highlights only the issues of those particular times, it cannot be considered a great piece of literature. That's why people still talk about the age of Shakespeare, Dryden, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and the age of Wordsworth who tried to challenge as well as change society through their writings.

Over the past century, there has been a significant rise in literary texts addressing the important topic of society. Marriage has consistently been seen as a crucial and intriguing concept for researchers in every era (Mohan & Kinloch, 2000). Moreover, marriage is regarded as an institution of kinship and is considered to be a transitional stage in the life of a person (Baker, 1969). The ideology of marriage in novels plays an important part in mirroring the mindset of individuals of that era. Kettle (2016) explains that novels were considered to be the predominant form of literature throughout the Victorian age. The main features of Austen's novels were family, love, wealth, struggle, status and oppression. Among all these features, the theme of marriage was prominent (Castle, 2013). The concept of marriage can be traced in different novels by Austen like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*. *Emma* is considered the masterpiece of Austen's writing. Austen used conflicting ideas from her society; her sole attention is based on a single type of marriage that is purely based on love.

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in a natural connection between a certain group of people and the kind of environment they inhabit (Koumakpaï & Towa-Sello, 2016). A fully developed Industrial Revolution, which particularly affected women marked the Victorian era of the 18th Century. The majority of literary critics who were present at that time begin to write about this issue in novels. Writers in the 17th and 18th centuries continued their experiments and created novels as a kind of literary genre. From the perspective of a female novelist, Jane Austen permits the portrayal of nature to have an impact on the emotions and thoughts of the characters. Snyder (1992) describes that nature and women have been the same since both may be kept in a controlled and domesticated way, yet exist as uncontrolled and untamed entities. Connell's (2002) study states that Jane Austen discusses the frequent experiences of worthlessness, instability and internal turmoil that affect women. Jane Austen is considered the most well-informed novelist around the globe and experts regard her as an essential English novelist. Austen's world is dominated by women and tends to focus mostly on female characters. The previous study is one of the references that the researcher used in support of the research. The researcher found studies that highlight the theme of marriage and gender in the novels but with contrasting objectives and aims.

A study presented by Nelson (2005) under the title *Till This Moment, I Never Knew Myself: Developing Self, Love, And Art in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, and Emma* compared two famous novels of Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* with *Emma*. Furthermore, the researcher of the study used the development of women's theory to examine the personalities of the women character in the novels. This study uses concepts of rejection and popularity to investigate the main character to investigate whom she adores and whom she wants to wed.

Preston's (2012) study of *Emma* highlights the stylistic similarities between *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* noting that both novels follow the maturation process of young women as they transition into becoming the lady of the house. The researcher analyzed how Emma and Mr. Knightly come into a relationship by analyzing and reading the conversation between the two of them. The results manifest that while analyzing the novels the issues of social class are vital to consider because class along with gender creates automatic differences of power.

Valentinova Georgieva (2018) argues in a study on the social status and marriage of women in novels by Jane Austen; *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility*. This study aimed to investigate the kinds of a marriage of that time through age, love or even social status. Jane Austen creates characters of women comprised in the plot like the protagonist also consists of love affairs in the novel. The conclusion describes that Jane

Austen gives viewers of her time a message by applying methods of comedy as well as satire in her writing.

Considering the research gaps in the above-mentioned studies, no previous researcher conducted a study for analyzing the ideologies of females of the 18th century regarding the theme of marriage in novels. This study also aims to examine the representation of ideologies through critical discourse analysis that how marriages are portrayed in the 18th century by considering the Socio-cognitive model presented by Van Dijk (1995).

Material and Methods

The present study used a model of CDA which is the Socio-Cognitive model presented by Van Dijk (1995) to unveil the hidden ideologies. This model comprised three layers (micro, super, and macro) and each layer has its purpose to respond to the research questions of any research. Van Dijk (1995) mentions that models control the acts of people, the style of writing or even speaking, or the way they understand the social practices of others, he also mentions the name of mental representations. The present study has considered the level of macrostructure to disclose the ideology of the author on a broader level. For a macro layer of the proposed model, its main focus is to place more focus on the overall or broad meaning by examining the topic and themes of the text. The sample for this study is the data sourced through a web-based official. The researchers selected the novel *Emma* by Jane Austen. This novel consists of 19 chapters. The instruments of this study are the researchers themselves and act to collect the required data. The present study has used a descriptive qualitative approach as this method represents the research problem accurately. Through the qualitative research method, this study elaborates on the hidden concepts and meanings in the novels. The researcher used this method to explain the valid and detailed insight of the novels.

Results and Discussion

A semantic concept called macrostructure involves the creation and understanding of the speech. It serves as a symbol for the broad or universal meaning of the statement. Louwse (2006) initially coined the term macrostructure for general principles of text organization for narrative techniques in literary works in 1965 as shown by her book *Poetic und Linguistik*. Macro structures are broad textual outlines that define a text's overall meaning. Macro structures are generalized semantic representations of a text, analogous to a text's overall meaning and topic, therefore it gives global coherence. Simply put, Van Dijk claims that macrostructures correspond to the core of the data. There are four categories of macro rules:

1. Generalization.
2. Omission or deletion.
3. Construction.
4. Integration.

The following lines of novel are mentioned below for the analysis structure by using macrostructure to look specifically into it:

Table 1

Analysis of Emma by Jane Austen through Generalization

Page	Chapter	Dialogue
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62

X

Fortune, I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house.

From the above dialogue, it is stated that the process of generalization takes place. Jane Austen wrote to the point in the novel without adding extra information. For proving the ideology of women's freedom in Austen's time, the author portrayed Emma as a free soul. Austen *magnifies* the concept of woman's freedom in her time by making her points valid; she employed the rule of generalization by emphasizing the concept of wants and desires of women through her characters in the novel *Emma*. Jane Austen also tried to represent her ideology through her specific word choice by emphasizing *I do not want* three times in a row to convince the reader that women of the 18th century can live alone and could also possess the power to decide their destiny.

Table 2
Analysis of Emma by Jane Austen through Integration

Page	Chapter	Dialogue
333	XI	She was proved to have been universally mistaken, and she had not quite done nothing – for she had done mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and she too much feared, Mr. Knightly.

From the above quotes from Chapter XI of *Emma* by Jane Austen, the application of the Integration process has been detected. The lines from the text shows the theme of the passage which is 'Emma realized her mistakes'. In CDA the purpose of Integration helps to understand the *Agenda* of the author of the novel (Jane Austen) and why she let Emma (heroine) realize her mistakes. The Agenda of Jane Austen in this dialogue is to highlight the factor before her readers that excessive usage of power by women does not prove fruitful in the Victorian period as it destroys relationships.

Table 3
Analysis of Emma by Jane Austen through Construction

Page	Chapter	Dialogue
29	Volume 1 Chapter V	You might not give Emma such a complete education as your powers would seem to promise; but you were receiving a very good education from <i>her</i> , on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid.

The purpose of Construction is to construct meaning on a more global level and connect ideas to make sense. By reading the passage, through certain words; the reader could easily infer the message delivered. In the field of Critical Discourse Analysis, authors use certain types of sentences assertive, passive or imperative to make an impression on the reader's mind. Austen uses imperative sentence type here, *Submitting your own will*,

doing as you were bid to prove her ideology that man speaks freely in the 18th Century and they had privileges that women of that time cannot get. Austen specified the concept of male dominance in her time by *manipulating* her reader by using this rule of construction.

This current study has used the Van Dijk (1995) Socio-Cognitive model as this model helps to unveil the ideology of the authors in the novels by focusing only on the Macrostructure level for interpretation in discourse as it describes the meaning of the text on a global level. To answer the first question researchers of this study analyzed the dialogues of the married characters in the novels. Marriage is the central theme of the novel *Emma* and every character is somehow attached to this theme. The researcher analyzed two couples of *Emma* to acknowledge the type of marriage ideology presented by Austen in her writing. Austen portrayed two types of marriage ideologies in the novel. The first one is the relationship between Mr. Weston and Mrs. Weston which turned into a type of pedagogic marriage ideology. A pedagogic marriage explains the type of marriage where women get training to become better wives for their husbands and women's central duty is supposed to please their husbands (Moore, 2013). While the second type of marriage ideology represented in the novel *Emma* is between Emma herself (Protagonist) and Mr. George Knightly which later turned into a type of companionate marriage. Companionate marriage is based on love and affection between partners. W. S. Jones (2005) emphasizes that marrying someone just for the sake of improving the social status and not for love proves poor judgment. The relationship between Emma and Mr. Knightly starts as a relationship of student/ mentor and ended as a lover's relationship.

The second question acts as the main question for the research project as it relates the whole analysis to discourse. The researcher of this study used a sub-level of macrostructure to analyze the hidden ideology of female authors regarding marriage. Through generalization: Austen emphasized or magnified the aspect of women's freedom of her time. The way Emma talks with everyone freely makes her heard in matters of life. The way she argues with a male figure Mr. Knightly represented her boldness. Through discourse, the researchers disclose Austen's ideology from the beginning of the novel. Through Integration: Jane Austen's 'Agenda' is comprehensible that women of the Victorian age could not live by their own rules completely like Emma tried to do. The failure of her heroine in her skills of match-making symbolizes the issue of gender failure in the Victorian period.

Through Construction: The researcher of the study used this process of construction to interpret the hidden ideology of the authors. In *Emma*, Jane Austen specified certain information to manipulate his reader for proving her ideology regarding male domination in society. The reproduction and production through discourse explain the manipulation technique used by an author to change the thought structure of their readers. Stating particular dialogues at a specific time only demonstrates the author's ideology regarding an aspect that assists them to reproduce their ideologies in the reader. Austen uses discourse markers in her writings to manipulate readers, by manipulating the author to reproduce her ideology in the minds of the reader by letting them that the ideology of certain authors is a true reflection of society. By reproducing the ideology author changes the thought structure of the readers. The readers of the text will act according to the author's ideology and will follow the author's perspective. Austen's represented her strong belief regarding the rights of the women of the 18th Century in the novel that a woman should have the right to choose for her life, and marriage is not the only option for her. The purpose of doing this is the practice of that concept among society.

Conclusion

Following Critical Discourse Analysis based on the Van Dijk's (1995) Socio-cognitive model concerning the Macrostructure level, the study's result portrays the different types of marriage ideologies in the novels. Austen describes pedagogic and companionate marriage in the novel. This author highlights that marriage was an important socio-factor of her time whether someone denies it or not. Lastly by analyzing the novel through the macrostructure level of the Socio-cognitive model Van Dijk (1995), the researcher investigates the hidden ideologies of female authors related to the theme of marriage. The author used magnification to highlight the theme of marriage in her time, the author also portrayed the agenda that is according to the ideologies and in the end, after doing this author manipulates the reader to accept a certain way of thinking. Through discourse, one can present the ideology by not stating it directly. The result of the study showed that the ideology of female authors regarding the theme of marriage in an 18th-century novel reflects the true picture of a society in that women are underprivileged and under the influence of men in marriage.

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