

Language and Beliefs in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*

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Abstract: Special and distinctive set of words, in language, are essential and necessary on occasions when serious and critical discussions are made. Beliefs, on the other hand, cannot be separated from language for the two are inter related. The major focus of this work is to scrutinize how special and exclusive language use has supported Kureishi in his *The Buddha of Suburbia* to reveal and deal with the aspect of the ideological pattern of gender and power. In this study, the special language use and their underlying beliefs will be examined in the novel. The study uses the critical discourse analysis (C D A) in an attempt to put the language use in proper view. In other words, the study will explore into the interconnectedness that are active between the language use and principles in Kureishi's unveiling; an area which has not been thoroughly tracked or had been studied.

Keywords: *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Language, beliefs, Gender, Power.

Among linguistic scholars, from late 1970s until today, the concern of using language to discover the ideological issues of power, gender, social relations and socio-economic position has produced interests. Lots of critics have showed the vital role language has been playing in producing and spreading the relationships of power, social relations and gender beliefs. This portrays the fact that language is a technique of living as it is necessary in every step of our life. Language plays a very complicated role to form a structure of the society. People do not only use language to express their thoughts and feelings, but also they are given different identities and become able to describe their communications through using language. Due to the fact that language is a social phenomenon, it is strongly influenced by social and cultural factors such as gender, age, educational level, social level and so forth. Finding of the existing relationship between language and linguistic variations in use is frequently provided through the examination of linguistic and social differences. Recently, research can be seen on the continual of differences between men's and women's language use has been flared up which is considered as one of the prime issues of linguistics. This paper indicates that men's and women's language are considerably different from each other and vice versa and women are also treated differently through language. Although women have a different pattern of language, they may change them based on some other characteristics such as social class, social situation, age, educational level and so forth. For instance, the way a female professor or doctor talks is totally different from the way a saleswoman or a woman driver talks. The present study aims to evaluate the existing gender differences of language use in suburban society through the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

Gender distribution has affected the whole society along with the way men and women use language. There are various theories concerning of gender differences in language use. Ralph Fasold in his book *The Sociolinguistics of Language* in 1990 examined the influence of social communication on language use. The theory of the sociolinguistic gender pattern was also examined and explained which is considered a tool to lighten up the existing connection between gender relations with a society. Aitchison J. (1998) has accomplished a research where he claims that women are more conservative when they talk by replacing imperative or direct sentences with questions. For example if a woman is asked "what time are we going to have the dinner?" she will answer "is it at 8?" instead of "it's at 8". However, this style of talking is specific to the weak people who are afraid of provoking arguments and outrage. On the other hand Lakoff (1973) has said us the reason why this happens and how does it happen: "If a little girl 'talks rough' like a boy, she will normally be ostracized, scolded, or made fun of. In this way society, in the form of a child's parents and friends, keeps her in line, in her place (47)." So, this is basically the society that teaches her to be, to talk. Women tend to use more standard forms than men and it is commonly alleged that women speak more correctly than men, but the real reason of this way of talking is still under question. There are some justifications which have been proposed those can be right to some extent. For example, women are under pressure in patriarchal societies and are expected to be ladylike which is according to Judith Burtler's theory is performance that society imposes on a particular sex holders. So, they are expected to behave more politely than men. Some people believe that talking properly is considered a part of their personality and associated with their femininity. It can be also the influence of child-rearing responsibilities which make women talk in a way that they can be good patterns for their children's improvement in the future. In addition, women mostly choose those jobs which need more communication skills rather than physical expertise (Aitchison, 1990, p. 182). Hash Chide (1981) in his research states that there are some differences between men and women in expressives and declaratives. Women pay more attention to the love feelings. According to "The Standard Theory" put forward by Chide, the gender differences and emotional beliefs are associated which differ between men and women. Speech acts whether Expressive and declarative create some rules and standards that people judge their own feelings or others based on them. The way people manage their feelings is strongly linked to the cultural standards, for example men have to control their feelings and avoid being upset, and women have to prevent from being furious. If a man cries it is not appreciated but on the other hand, if a woman cries, she is considered as a soft hearted woman. However, men and women are different just in the way they express their feelings, but they are similar in experiencing them. But society tends to

believe that women express their anger more verbally, but men do it behaviorally. Eckert (2003) says:

We are surrounded by gender role from the time we were very small. It is evr present in conversation, humor and conflict, and it is called upon to explain everything from driving styles to food preferences. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires that it appears to us to be completely natural. (9)

Lakoff in her piece of writing says:

The mar-ginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of. In appropriate women's speech, strong expression of feeling is avoided, expression of uncertainty is favored, and means of expression in regard to subject-matter deemed 'trivial' to the 'real' world are elaborated. ... The personal identity of women thus is linguistically submerged; the language works against treatment of women, as serious persons with individual views (45).

Lakoff's Views about Gender and Language is women tend to use...

Use "wh-" imperatives: (such as, "Why don't you open the door?")

Speak less frequently

Overuse qualifiers: (for example, "I think that...")

Apologise more: (for instance, "I'm sorry, but I think that...")

Use modal constructions: (such as *can*, *would*, *should*, *ought*-"Should we turn up the heat?")

Avoid coarse language or expletives

Use indirect commands and requests: (for example, "My, isn't it cold in here?" -really a request to turn the heat on or close a window)

Use more intensifiers: especially *so* and *very* (for instance, "I am *soglad* you came!")

Lack a sense of humour: women do not tell jokes well and often don't understand the punch line of jokes. Etc. and men are totally the opposite users of women's language.

However, based on the aforesaid differences, different male and female characters of *The Buddha of Suburbia* are examined. It is notable that some of the difference occurs and some does not but some of these differences are really controversial. We also see the beliefs of seeing women through men's eye. The following examples have been derived from *The Buddha of Suburbia*, by Hanif Kureishi:

1. "Mum was a plump and unphysical woman with a pale round face and kind brown eyes. I imagined that she considered her body to be an inconvenient object surrounding her, as if she were stranded on an unexplored desert island." (4)

These lines actually is very straight forward physical description of a women who anyhow is Karim's mother; the person who is describing the physicality of his own mother. And this is to some extent prohibited or very unfamiliar in Asian society. It is not that men in this society do not show disrespect or use these words against women; but not so directly for mother.

In Asian society people don't talk about mother's physic in the manner karim has done. However, by doing so Karim has shown the culture he

has accepted and practices.

2. "She ignores me. Can't you see that? She treats me like dog's muck, Haroon." (5)

In the above sentence, it can be seen that Karim's mother is using soaring words which according to many critics used by men and not women. But it is evident here that these may to some extent be true but not fixed. Women also use bad words though they are much conscious about their use of words.

And also the question she asks "Can't you see that?" is a tag question used by Margaret. This according to Lakoff and other theorists is that women ask tag questions to seek confirmation due to the fact.

3. "Dad taught me to flirt with everyone I met, boys and girls alike, and I came to see charm, rather than courtesy or honesty, or even decency, as the primary social grace." (7)

This shows that how women are treated like an object in society. This shows the language of treatment men has for women and Harun is also teaching his son to be and to treat women alike him.

4. "'Why did you bring him home like this?' Said Mum. ... 'Couldn't you have looked after him?' She said. ... 'I was looking out of the window and waiting for you for hours. Why didn't you ring?'" (18)

This is also another example of women's using of indirect speech through questions and imperatives in the novel. This evident the women's inferior place in the context that has been portrayed in the text.

5. "Your father looks like a magician." (31)

Eva uttered this to Karim. The very word 'magician' is a word that she has used as a simile. Or even we can consider this artistic use of word of a women's expression which is not so evident in the case of men.

6. "Marrying Changez would be, in her mind, a rebellion, ... She claimed to be doing it only for Jeeta, but there was real, willful contrariness in it, I suspected." (82)

As it can be seen in the above examples, women's discourse is cooperative. It means that women in conversation usually try to sympathize with one another and to support and admire the ideas and contributions of others. But here, one woman is trying to support another woman through action which we get from Karim's description. This difference is transparent and easily understandable in Asian culture.

7. "Dad has always felt superior..." (250)

This sentence gives us the feeling that as a man Harun, the speaker's father was very conscious about his manhood and status and strength.

According to the obtained results of the investigation into the gender differences in the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi, it can be concluded that most of the claims by critics like Lakoff and Trask occurs in this novel and so does in suburbia. Considering to the fact that this novel is a representation of the suburban life it can be considered that women are likely to use artistic words. Women also support each other by their oral discourse and actions as well. But we also see woman using

inappropriate words. So, there is a vice versa. This is may be because of the society they live in and has been brought up. We also see Karim telling that his dad thinks himself superior. It is like in patriarchal society where men are suppose to be stronger and also have a competitive mind or attitude. Language and gender beliefs are controversial topics which have newly been of much interest in the study of linguistics. At first, it may be conceived that men's and women's language use are the same or they vary just in vocabularies, but through an accurate assessment, we can evaluate the extent to which men and women use language differently due to the fact that language is a social phenomenon. In this article, the existing gender differences in Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* by applying few differences proposed by Robin Lakoff. These differences are there in the society. Finally, we can conclude that although the most common differences are those which were put forward by Lakoff, some other elements such as culture, religion, beliefs, education, etc. can be influential in gender differences at language use and about the beliefs about women.

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