

A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Marvel Comics

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Abstract : The purpose of the study is to explore the power relations linguistically and visually with reference to the representation of gender, race, violence, and empowerment through male characters and female superheroes from the two selected Marvel comics, Ms. Marvel (2014) and Captain Marvel (2019-). The study also aims to elaborate on the different cultural backgrounds of female superheroes and their choices and behaviors concerning the male characters. Moreover, it also seeks to explore whether the female superheroes reassert or resists the established gender roles. Using the tenets of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) by Lazar (2005), the study analyzed the power relations from a feminist viewpoint. The linguistic analysis of textual features such as 'adjectives', 'lexical items', 'metaphors', and 'use of pronouns', etc., found in the selected comics is carried out under the framework of CDA given by Fairclough (1989). Kress and van Leeuwen's model of reading images (2006) are used to analyze the visual images in this study. The findings of the study show that despite the empowering nature of female superheroes, the unequal power relations between male and female characters are established linguistically and visually, which further sustains and reinforces the racial and patriarchal gender ideologies in the selected comics. Moreover, it is recommended that the female representations in the feminist themes of empowerment with respect to the Pakistani female superheroes should also be explored for further research.

Keywords : feminist critical discourse analysis, patriarchal gender ideology, power relations, superhero comics

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