

Unveiling Contradiction in Puritan Ideology: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *The Scarlet Letter* by using van Dijk's (2006) Categories

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores contradiction as an influential concept in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. The study aims to identify contradiction in the Puritan ideology of *The Scarlet Letter*, investigate how contradiction shown in *The Scarlet Letter* affect society and culture, and analyze contradiction with van Dijk's (2006) categories found in *The Scarlet Letter*. The study establishes three hypotheses concerning the aims: (1) Different categories are used to analyze contradiction in *The Scarlet Letter*. (2) Irony is the most category used in the analysis to create a contradiction in *The Scarlet Letter* (3) Contradiction is used to reveal the Puritan Ideology in *The Scarlet Letter*. To achieve the aims and verify these hypotheses, the study adopted van Dijk's (2006) categories to analyze contradictions in the Puritan Ideology of *The Scarlet Letter*. Based on the results, the study concludes that: (1) Contradiction is analyzed by using a variety of categories such as: (metaphor irony, us – them categorization, authority, and presupposition) in *The Scarlet Letter*. (2) Metaphor is the most category used and the most effective tool for exposing contradiction. (3) *The Scarlet Letter* makes heavy use of contradiction to highlight the complexity and faults of Puritan ideology.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, contradiction, power, and ideology.

كشف التناقض في الأيديولوجيا البيوريتانية: تحليل خطاب نقدي للحرف القرمزي باستخدام

فئات فان دايك (٢٠٠٦)

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الملخص

تستكشف الدراسة الحالية التناقض كمفهوم مؤثر في رواية الحرف القرمزي لنانثيال هوثورن. تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد التناقض في الأيديولوجيا البيوريتانية للحرف القرمزي، والتحقق في كيفية تأثير التناقض الموضح في الحرف القرمزي على المجتمع والثقافة، وتحليل التناقض مع فئات فان ديك (٢٠٠٦) الموجودة في الحرف القرمزي. وتضع الدراسة ثلاث فرضيات تتعلق بالأهداف: (١) استخدمت فئات مختلفة لتحليل التناقض في الحرف القرمزي. (٢) السخرية هي الفئة الأكثر استخدامًا في التحليل لخلق تناقض في الحرف القرمزي. (٣) يستخدم التناقض للكشف عن الأيديولوجيا البيوريتانية في الحرف القرمزي. ولتحقيق الأهداف والتحقق من هذه الفرضيات، اعتمدت الدراسة فئات فان دايك (٢٠٠٦) لتحليل التناقضات في الأيديولوجيا البيوريتانية للحرف القرمزي. وبناء على النتائج توصلت الدراسة إلى ما يلي: (1) يتم تحليل التناقض باستخدام مجموعة متنوعة من الفئات مثل: (الاستعارة ، السخرية ، تصنيف نحن - هم، السلطة ، والافتراضات) في الحرف القرمزي. (٢) الاستعارة هي الفئة الأكثر استخدامًا والأداة الأكثر فعالية لكشف التناقض. (٣) تستخدم الحرف القرمزي التناقض استخدامًا كبيرًا لتسليط الضوء على أخطاء وتعقيد الايديولوجية البيوريتانية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي ، التناقض ، القوة ، والأيديولوجيا.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are various definitions for the concept of contradiction. Contradiction is “a statement or fact that is opposite to or different from another” according to the Oxford Dictionary (2010, p. 173). For instance:

(1) “There were a number of contradictions in what he told the police.”

However, according to Gold et al. (2019, p. 1), contradiction is “a symmetrical relation between two texts that cannot be true at the same time,” as in:

(2)“(a) All children get the same education; and (b) Some children get better education.”

Nonetheless, some scholars use alternative terminology to illustrate the same contradiction. According to Crystal (1987), negation conveys the negation or contradiction of all or part of the meaning of a sentence. In the meantime, Spears (1998, p. 78) defines contradiction in terms of idioms; according to him, a contradictory statement qualifies as a contradiction. Furthermore, he embodies the subsequent idiom:

(3)“A straight–talking politician” is a contradiction.

Finally, Marten and Ringham (2000) defined contradiction as a logical component of the basic structure of meaning. Since one of the opposing terms is negated and hence becomes nonexistent, it is recognized as such. For example, the terms "non–life" and "life" are incompatible because the former denotes death, and the latter is the opposite term in the semantic category of existence.

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

The study of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is an immense field. It has offered strategies and models for handling problems in various fields. The CDA's growth as a network of academics appeared with a small symposium in Amsterdam in January 1991. The University of Amsterdam supported Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, and Ruth Wodak in spending two days together discussing the theories and methods of discourse analysis, namely CDA (Wodak, 2001).

Indeed, Fairclough (1995) asserts that CAD seeks to make connections between properties of text features of discourse practice

and broader sociocultural practice. Therefore, conducting any discourse analysis critically means thinking about whatever people read, hear, and watch. Instead, Van Dijk (2001) points out that CDA offers a critical viewpoint on conducting research; it is discourse analysis with an attitude. It focuses on social issues, mainly the function of language in creating and maintaining abuse or dominance of power.

Van Dijk (1995) proposes a valuable framework for comprehending the aims of CDA. Hence, these aims emphasize the value of CDA as an instrument for analysis as the following:

- To explain the process in which discourse is used to exercise power.
- To describe the ways in which discourse reinforces social injustices.
- To comprehend how discourse might be utilized for challenging the status quo.
- To produce methods for influencing discourse that promotes societal change.

As a result, Bloor and Bloor (2007, pp. 2–13) remark that critical discourse analysts are “interested in the way in which language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and, in the part, this use plays in social maintenance and change.” They also add that CDA examines “practices and customs in society” to understand and explain how they function and to offer a critique of those practices. They argue that since CDA is a field that is continually evolving, new goals may well be set.

Basically, power and ideology are the key concept of CDA as the following:

2.1.1 power

Power is one of the major and the core concepts of CDA. In its ordinary sense, power is the ability to do any action/behavior or make any decisions that affect others. Van Dijk (1996, p. 84) argues that accounting for the relationship between discourse and social power is an

important task of CDA. He states that such an analysis must describe and clarify how power abuse “is enacted, reproduced or legitimized by the text and talk of dominant groups or institutions.”

Accordingly, Lukes (2005, p.20) states that power “is exercised when (A) participates in the making of decisions that affect (B)” i.e., this definition established the conventional notion that only individuals in positions of authority can exercise power and has served to clarify the various ways in which power can be used in society.

2.1.2 Ideology

Regarding ideology, it is one of the central concepts in CDA. Van Dijk (1995) points out that in the humanities and social sciences, ideological analysis of language and discourse is a common academic and critical activity. The basis of these analyses is that if language users convey their ideologies through language and communication whether intentionally or unintentionally paying attention to reading, comprehension, or systematic analysis may be able to reveal the ideologies of speakers or writers.

Moreover, Blommaert (2005, p. 158) define ideology as “a specific set of symbolic, representations – discourses, terms, arguments, images, stereotypes–serving a specific purpose.” These ideologies can be used by specific people for specific reasons hopefully CDA should discover these ideologies and why they are used in such a way.

2.2 van Dijk's Categories

The present research will adopt the following Van Dijk's (2006) categories:

1– Irony

It is a figure of speech in which words are used in a way that suggests the opposite of their literal meaning. In Van Dijk's approach, irony is seen as a form of indirect communication that involves saying one thing while meaning another. It is often used to express humor, surprise, or

sarcasm. It can be used to challenge dominant ideologies and power structures or to reinforce them. Van Dijk's analysis of irony involves examining how it is used in discourse and the implications of its use.

2– Metaphor

A technique used to comprehend and convey one notion or domain in terms of another. Metaphors can frame and structure discourse, shaping how ideas are understood and interpreted. It is a semantic–rhetorical figure and a powerful tool that can evoke emotions and convey complex meanings concisely and effectively. Van Dijk scrutinizes the metaphors employed to describe social groups, events, and phenomena and how these metaphors contribute to constructing and reinforcing ideologies.

3– Us– Them Categorization

The categorical division of people into in–groups (us) and out–groups (them) expresses polarized cognitions. This suggests that rather than being heavily influenced by models of particular events and people, talk and text are also heavily influenced by underlying social representations (attitudes, ideologies) of groups. This phenomenon is characterized by the tendency for individuals to develop favorable attitudes towards members of their own group (the in–group) and hostile attitudes towards members of other groups (the out–group).

4– Presupposition

Presupposition is an important concept that plays a role in understanding how ideologies are constructed and conveyed through language. Presupposition refers to the implicit assumptions or beliefs taken for granted or assumed to be true in a given discourse. The role of presupposition is to examine how these underlying assumptions shape how information is presented and interpreted and how they contribute to constructing and reinforcing ideologies. By scrutinizing presuppositions in discourse, ideological discourse analysis aims to

uncover the hidden or implicit ideological biases that may influence how information is framed and understood.

5– Authority

Authority is a way of analyzing how authority is invoked in discourse and how this can be used to convey ideological messages. Many speakers use the fallacy of citing authorities to support their case, commonly organizations or individuals who are higher than the fray of party politics or widely recognized experts or moral leaders. Furthermore, authority refers to how power and legitimacy are constructed and maintained through discourse.

3. METHODOLOGY

The current research utilized qualitative research method. The main goal of a qualitative research approach is “to understand how individuals make meaning of their social world.” This reality of society is created by people's social interactions with their surroundings (Biber, 2010, p.p. 455–6). This research investigates the concept of contradiction linguistically and critically in *The Scarlet Letter*. Additionally, the current research utilized numbers and frequencies to support, verify, and generalize the findings of the current research. Thus, Maxwell (2010, p. 476) states “there are legitimate and valuable uses of numbers even in purely qualitative research.”

The current research utilized an original novel as a basis for its data collection process. After reading the book, the researcher identified about four texts that provided the data for the current research, based on the criteria listed below. The selected data include texts from the novel *The Scarlet Letter*, in which the concept of contradiction is critically investigated. This American novel was written in the middle of the nineteenth century, specifically in 1850. The researcher adopted a copy of the 1988 edition. The author of it is Nathaniel Hawthorne, an American writer. As such, the event took place in Boston.

After that, the following criteria are taken into take into consideration:

First, to analyze the linguistic elements of the texts to uncover the concept of contradiction in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Second, to reach an assumption regarding the social role of speech. Thus, research on different discourse forms, such as novels, has grown in interest recently. Furthermore, these studies demonstrate that “storytelling not only has different structural categories in different cultures, but also puts specific constraints on who can tell what to who under what circumstances” (van Dijk, 1983, p. 4).

Third, the style of the novel is distinguished by its language, which emphasizes the idea of contradiction. Hawthorne highlights the contradiction in puritan society using a variety of language techniques. In a struggle between fate vs. will, speech vs. action, good vs. evil, and feelings vs. Thinking, the novel creates contradiction.

Regarding the analysis model, the researcher adopted van Dijk's (2006) Categories to analyze the concept of contradiction in *The Scarlet Letter*.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Chapter One (The Prison Door)

“This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it, or whether, as there is far authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson as she entered the prison-door, we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers, and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolise some sweet moral blossom that

may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow” (p.44)

The given text has the following categories:

1– Metaphor

Ann Hutchinson, a religious dissenter whom the puritans imprisoned, is represented by the rose-bush in this metaphor. The rose-bush is described as “stern” and “old,” suggesting it is a survivor. This might be interpreted as a metaphor for Ann Hutchinson, a fearless and independent woman who refuses to accept the puritans’ beliefs.

2– Irony

Irony is shown in “It may serve...to symbolize some sweet moral blossom.... or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.” The writer makes the meaning more effective by using two completely different ideas in which both words “sweet” and “sorrow” refer to the same rose-bush. The juxtaposition of opposing thoughts and feelings in the sentence illustrates irony. The writer’s use of the contrastive terms (sweet) and (sorrow) makes the statement more powerful and effective.

In light of contradiction, it is conceivable that the contrast between the rose-bush and the prison door echoes the complexity of human nature. There are often times when hope and despair, or beauty and ugliness, coexist in the same situation.

4.2 Chapter Two (The Market Place)

“as befitted a people among whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. Meagre, indeed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders, at the scaffold. On the other hand, a penalty which, in our days, would infer a degree of

mocking infamy and ridicule, might then be invested with almost as stern a dignity as the punishment of death itself” (pp.45–6)

The given text has the following categories:

1– Authority

The text shows how religion, law, and punishment interact in society under discussion.

2– Us – Them Categorization

The text shows that the people in consideration were significantly different, creating an impression of polarization and Us–Them categorization. The writer suggests that the people in that tradition were more serious and somber than the people in their own community by using adjectives like “venerable” and “stern” to characterize the way in which consequences were perceived in that society.

3– Metaphor

The text effectively uses the metaphor of “venerable” and “awful” punishments. It implies that the civilization in concern utilized the law and religion as justifications for oppression and brutality. It means that the citizens of that society were scared of opinions and differences.

As a matter of fact, the text includes contradiction in terms of the ideology it espouses. The writer depicts a society where even little offenses are treated seriously since religion and law are correlated. The consequences for breaking the law are severe and brutal, and no sympathy exists for them. This reflects a tightly controlled society. In contrast, the writer also proposes a society in which people are unable to feel sympathy for others who are suffering because they are preoccupied with their own religious and legalistic concerns.

4.3 Chapter Three (The Recognition)

“It was better to stand thus, with so many betwixt him and her, than to greet him face to face—they two alone. She fled for refuge, as it were,

to the public exposure, and dreaded the moment when its protection should be withdrawn from her” (p.58)

The given text has the following categories:

1– Metaphor

There is a metaphor in “She fled for refuge, as it were, to the public exposure...” The metaphor is crucial in expressing the intentions and feelings of the character, Hester. The text creates a clear picture of her inner pain, and her need for protection and acceptance in a society that frequently feels tough and unforgiving by comparing public exposure and seeking refuge.

2– Us–Them categorization

“Him and her” creates a binary, separated between Hester and Roger Chillingworth by contrasting them. The person is referred to as “them,” and Hester is referred to as “us”. By emphasizing the existence of a considerable number of people (the crowd) functioning as a barrier, this highlights the distance between the person and the character. This strengthens the Us–Them division even further.

3– Irony

The most evident irony is that the character seeks protection from a single person in the very place designed to shame her. She finds safety in exposure to the public. This contradictory situation draws attention to the complicated interplay between guilt, fear, and a desire for social interaction.

Basically, the character’s escape to public exposure for safety presents the most obvious contradiction. Although the character finds refuge and protection in public exposure, it is usually linked to shame and weakness. The character’s conflicted feelings for both connection and isolation are brought to light by this self–contradiction.

4.4 Chapter Four (The Interview)

“Thou wilt not reveal his name? Not the less he is mine,” resumed he, with a look of confidence, as if destiny were at one with him. “He bears no letter of infamy wrought into his garment, as thou dost, but I shall read it on his heart. Yet fear not for him! Think not that I shall interfere with Heaven’s own method of retribution, or, to my own loss, betray him to the gripe of human law. Neither do thou imagine that I shall contrive aught against his life; no, nor against his fame, if as I judge, he be a man of fair repute. Let him live! Let him hide himself in outward honour, if he may! Not the less he shall be mine!” “Thy acts are like mercy,” said Hester, bewildered and appalled; “but thy words interpret thee as a terror!” (p.68)

The given text has the following categories:

1– Irony

The irony of this text has multiple meanings. It gives Dimmesdale a more complex personality by exposing his possessive and manipulative underbelly of self-justification. It also criticizes the social traditions that punish external sins while keeping inner guilt. The irony also keeps the reader on edge and makes readers wonder about the characters’ desires, which adds to the suspense. Thus, the reader is left to consider the contradictions between his actions and words, his real goals, and the effects of his hidden immorality on those around him.

2– Us– Them Categorization

Dimmesdale takes position and uses his dominance assertions and subdued threats to maintain control over Hester. They become clearly divided into “them” (Hester) and “us” (Dimmesdale) as a result of this inequality of power.

3– Metaphor

The speaker in the provided text used a metaphor to suggest that, even though the person they are referring to not publicly show any evidence of shame or guilt, the speaker can nevertheless figure out the truth. “I

shall read it on his heart” is a metaphor that suggests the speaker can recognize the subject's true character even in the lack of any outward indication. This use of metaphorical language highlights the speaker’s assurance that he can tell a person’s true nature from his outward appearance. It emphasizes the speaker’s strong faith in their view by giving their statement deeper meaning and imagery. The use of metaphor illuminates the language and makes the speaker’s belief clearer and expressive.

4– Authority

The speaker’s assured and powerful phrasing gives the text a sense of authority: “Not the less he is mine,” the speaker’s assertion, conveying a strong sense of control and ownership. Despite how he would like to present himself, the speaker’s assurance that people will see the sinner serves to underline this authoritative statement even more. In “I shall read it on his heart,” the speaker’s assertion demonstrates authority and insight and implies that people can discover the individual in concern.

5– Presupposition

“He bears no letter of infamy wrought into his garment, as thou dost, but I shall read it on his heart” is one example of presupposition. In this speaker’s statement, it is assumed that the individual in question has a “letter of infamy” on his heart, even without a sign that can be seen on his heart. This statement implies that the speaker can distinguish an individual’s actual essence from their external appearance.

Eventually, the given text contains contradiction, which conveys contradictory meanings in the speaker’s words and actions. This appears in the notion of hypocrisy vs. morality, in which Dimmesdale portrays himself as a morally pure person, criticizing wrongdoing while keeping his own sin hidden. This duplicity brings into question the true essence of morality in Puritan society and stands contrary to his supposed authority.

5. RESULT AND CONCLUSION

The frequencies and percentage of occurrence of van Dijk categories displayed in table 1. The overall result shows that metaphor is the most utilized category in the analysis since it utilized 4 times out of 13 (30.76%) because several instances and characters in *The Scarlet Letter* represent opposite values. To draw attention to these contradictions, metaphors compare seemingly unrelated objects. Hester Prynne's scarlet letter, for instance, which was intended to be a sign of shame, instead becomes a source of courage and defiance. The contradiction is explained by a metaphor that compares the letter to a flaming bush, which can symbolize both revelation and punishment.

Moreover, irony and us– them categorization are utilized 3 times out of 13 (23%) because firstly, the contrast between expectation and reality is the primary focus of irony. It may draw attention to a contradiction, but more frequently than rather, it highlights how unexpected a single element is. Secondly, A society with a complex system of social norms and internal conflicts is shown in *The Scarlet Letter*. A rigid "us – them categorization may oversimplify these complicated issues. Certain characters, such as Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne, are difficult to classify. Hester, rejected for her adultery, demonstrates kindness and courage. Considered a religious clergyman, Dimmesdale is a perfect example of duplicity.

For authority, it utilized 2 times out of 13 (15.38%) since the struggle between a person's morals and the authority of the society is central to the subject matter of the novel. Hester refuses to talk about her sinful partner, defying social norms. Dimmesdale suffers shame as a result of social and religious pressure. Themes like truth, freedom, and the boundaries of imposed power are all explored through an analysis of these contradictions.

Finally, presupposition is utilized 1 time out of 13 (7.69%) since presuppositions can be useful in revealing linguistic biases and hidden meanings. Nonetheless, the more overt differences between the behaviors of the characters, the expectations of society, and their expressed beliefs are typically the subject of the central critique of contradictions in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Table 1

No.	van Dijk's Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Metaphor	4	30.76%
2	Irony	3	23%
3	Us – Them Categorization	3	23%
4	Authority	2	15.38%
5	Presupposition	1	7.69%
Total		13	100%

CONCLUSION

Based on the qualitative analysis of the selected data, the present research has reached the following conclusions:

1– Contradiction is analyzed by using a variety of categories such as: (metaphor irony, us – them categorization, authority, and presupposition) in *The Scarlet Letter*. Through the use of this toolbox, readers can comprehend the contradiction of *The Scarlet Letter's* in a more nuanced way, which enhances the significance of Hawthorne's examination of sin, salvation, social norms, and the complexity of human nature. Accordingly, the results reveal that hypothesis **No.1** is verified.

2– Metaphor is the most category used and the most effective tool for exposing contradiction. Metaphors reveal the complexity of individuals, circumstances, and symbols by drawing comparisons between seemingly different things. Hester's scarlet letter, intended to represent shame, for instance, transforms into a symbol of strength. Hence, hypothesis **No.2** is refuted.

3– *The Scarlet Letter* makes heavy use of contradiction to highlight the complexity and faults of Puritan ideology. Hawthorne challenges the reader to consider the strict ethical standards of the Puritans by using contradictions. He reveals the inconsistencies, the restrictions on freedom of choice, and the complexities of redemption from sin. These contradictions in turn become an effective tool for exposing the fundamental weaknesses of the society. Thereupon, the results verify hypothesis **No.3**.

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