

A Contrastive Critical Stylistic Study of Women Empowerment in Cartoon Theme Songs

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دراسة تقابلية اسلوبية نقدية لتمكين المرأة في اغاني مقدمات الكارتون

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Abstract

This study focuses on the concept of women empowerment in cartoon theme songs, in their English and Arabic 5 songs, Kim Possible (2002) and Sailor Moon (199 versions). The data was collected from two sources in order to investigate the

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deferent strategies to deliver women empowerment to the audience. It also aims to reveal the differences and similarities between the Arabic versions and the English versions. The paper utilise Jeffries' model (2010) as a tool for analysing the data. The study is limited to employing six tools: naming and describing, Representing Actions/Events/States, Equating and Contrasting, Prioritizing, Implying and Assuming, and Negation. The main conclusion is that despite the different cultures and tools, the concept still apparent in the data.

Keywords: Critical Stylistics, women empowerment, cartoon theme songs.

المستخلص

الدراسة تركز على مفهوم تمكين المرأة في اغاني مقدمة افلام الكارتون، كيم بوسيبيل (2002) و بحارة القمر (1995) في كلتا اللغتان العربية والانكليزية. جمعت العينة من مصدرين لغرض التحقق من الاستراتيجيات المختلفة المستعملة لتوصيل مفهوم تمكين المرأة للجمهور. احد اهداف البحث هو التوصل لمعرفة اوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين النسخ العربية والانكليزية. يوظف البحث جفريز (2010) كوسيلة لتحليل العينة. البحث محدود باستخدام ست من ادوات جفريز: التسمية والوصف، الاجراءات/ الاحداث/ الحالات، المعادلة والتباين، الاولوية، التلميح والافتراض، والنفيز احد اهم الاستنتاجات التي توصل لها هذا البحث هو انه رغم اتلاف الثقافات والادوات الموجهة لها هذا الاغاني الا ان مفهوم تمكين المرأة مازال واضحا في العينة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اسلوبية نقدية، تمكين المرأة، اغاني مقدمات الكارتون

1. Introduction

The current study is to examine the concept of women empowerment in cartoon's theme songs in an attempt to uncover the message that are directed at

children. This paper aims to fill this gap by pinpointing the how words and structures can be used to achieve women empowerment using critical stylistics. In addition, the study aims to unravel similarities between the English and Arabic theme songs of the same cartoons.

This study aims to answer the following research questions: 1) What is women empowerment? 2) What are the strategies used to achieve the message of women empowerment in the English and Arabic versions? 3) What are the differences and similarities between the English and Arabic Version?

Based on the questions above, this study has the following aims: 1) providing a general overview on the concept of women empowerment, 2) figuring out the strategies used to achieve the message of women empowerment in the English and Arabic versions and 3) stating the the differences and similarities between the English and Arabic Version.

This study is confined to the examination of women empowerment through using six tools of critical stylistics, naming and describing, Representing Actions/Events/States, Equating and Contrasting, Prioritizing, Implying and Assuming, and Negation. In addition, the study is limited to two cartoon theme), in their English and Arabic 5songs, Kim Possible (2002) and Sailor Moon (199 versions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Stylistics

There is a level of meaning that exist between what de Saussure gives the terms ‘langue’ and ‘parole’, i.e., between the ‘systematic (coded) meaning and the meaning of language use that is variable and context dependent. The text or utterance, at this level, presents a view of the world by employing the language resources (Jeffries, 2014).

Critical stylistics is considered an approach to detecting ideologies, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with them (Jeffries, 2014). According to Jeffries (2010), the tools must ‘answer the question of what any text is doing.’

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Jeffries (2010 and 2014) suggests ten tools that can be used to analyse texts:

- Naming and Describing
- Representing Actions/Events/States
- Equating and Contrasting
- Exemplifying and Enumerating
- Prioritizing
- Assuming and Implying
- Negating
- Hypothesizing
- Presenting the Speech and Thoughts of other Participants
- Representing Time, Space and Society.

Jeffries (2010) takes into consideration the ‘stylistics choices.’ Those choices, whether they were made consciously or unconsciously by the producer, can be highlighted through the analysis of the text.

2.2 Empowerment

All discourses contain ideology. It is a fact that you cannot avoid. Ideologies can vary, being either obvious (*‘I hate foreigners’*) or hidden (*‘Those horrible foreigners are back again’*) (Jeffries, 2010).

Empowerment can be defined as ‘the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one’s life. It implies control over resources and decisions (Narayan, 2005, p.4).’ it can also refer to the process where a person can realise the connection between his goals and the path of how he can achieve them (Mechanic, 1991).

Rappaport (1984) adds that empowerment is seen as observed over multiple levels of analysis. It is a process that can enable people, communities and organizations obtain control over their own lives.

Empowerment includes 'principles and framework' that make our knowledge organized (Zimmerman, 2000, p.43). Within the notion of empowerment there is the assumption that a number of social problems can be traced to uneven distribution of resources or access to resources (Zimmerman, 2000, p.43). Empowerment, since an action, activity or structure can be empowering, suggests that the outcome of these processes is being empowered.

On the the level of the individual of analysis, it is mostly psychological empowerment (Zimmerman, 1990a; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, as cited in Zimmerman, 2000), which include a set of beliefs about one's ability and efforts to gain control (Zimmerman, 2000, p.4

2.3 Women Empowerment

According to Merriam Webster dictionary (n.d.), 'women empowerment is the act or action of empowering someone or something: the granting of the power, right, or authority to perform various acts or duties.'

Two things can be used to differentiate between women empowerments and other notions : process and agency (Kabeer, 2001; Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Rowlands, 1995, as cited in Narayan,2005). So, women must be a vital agent in the change process when it is measured or described.

Language can be used as an instrument to empower women through using it as a mean to express their show identities, stand up for their rights. They can also use language to curve public discourse (Alpha Omega Translations, 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1 The Data

The data consists of two cartoon theme songs. The analysis is conducted on the English and Arabic versions of the songs. The first theme song is taken from Sailor

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Moon was first premiered in North America in 1995. The data was chosen purposefully since it is rich when it comes to this concept.

The Model3.2

This study follows a qualitative method of analysis to the data. The model used is based on (Jeffries, 2014) and it is limited to six tools, naming and describing, Representing Actions/Events/States, Equating and Contrasting, Prioritizing, Implying and Assuming, and Negation.

3.2.1 Naming and Describing

One of the means to create an ideology is through the use of naming, selecting a name from multiple options, is an obvious example. At the same time is is important to discover information hidden within the noun phrase borders, or even a group of nouns. It can be concluded that to name and a describe is the most explicit thing that a text can do (Jeffries, 2014).

The process of nominalization is to describe, what is normally described by a verb, by the use of a noun. This process can cause ideological effects (Jeffries, 2010).

Even though individuals may not be in a place to question or evaluate, they are still presented with evaluative adjectives accompanying the name, e.g. ‘the *important* review of taxation (Jeffries, 2014, p.413).’

3.2.3 Equating and Contrasting

Jeffries noticed that texts are able to make unusual synonyms and opposites,

such as in:

‘Labour says he’s black.’

‘Tories say he’s British (Jeffries, 2014, p.414)

These sentences were on a political campaign in the 1980s by the Conservative Party in the UK. The even though surface meaning is that *Tories* cannot see colour, the text suggests that they are not racist in contrast with *labour*. And as long as texts can build a certain view of the world, they or their writers are able to present things which are equal and things which are in contrast of each other (Jeffries, 2014)

3.2.4 Prioritising

One of the features of textual meaning is placing the most important in piece of information in the superordinate of subordinate clause. This meaning then can 'sits clearly at the juncture of decontextual systematic language structure and its use in context (Jeffries, 2014, p.415). Such placing of information can show which information are in the background (subordinate clausr) and which are in the foreground (the main clause) (Jeffries, 2014).

3.2.5 Implying and Assuming

The concepts of implying and assuming having much to do with the concepts of presupposition in semantics and implicatures in the study of pragmatics. One of the qualities of presupposition is they help in making communication more economic, but at the same time they can carry ideological significance. And since definite nouns carry existential presupposition, sometimes we can have an overlap with the tool of *naming and describing*. Other constructions can also carry presuppositions, such as factive verbs, which carry the presupposition of truth. When it comes to implicatures, they can build a view of the world that represents the narrator of the text (Jeffries, 2014).

3.2.6 Negating

Negating carry a significance in the that can direct the reader or listener toward the a particular image of what the positive version would be. '(e.g. The Prime Minister is not an incompetent fool out of touch with the electorate) (Jeffries, 2014, p.416). At the same time it is able to make people thing about the positive and negative outcome. Jefferis asserts that the positive version is most

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likely to be clearer in the hearer's mind when the negative version is presented in details (Jeffries, 2014).

1. Data Analysis

4.1 Kim Possible Intro (English and Arabic)

This is an American cartoon. It is about a girl in her teenage years who fights crimes. At the same time, she faces issues related to family, school and friends. It was first aired in 2002. the English and Arabic versions of the lyrics were extracted from the website *Lyrics Translate*.

4.1.1 Naming and Describing

In the **English** version, the intro starts with the character identifying herself as a 'girl', premodifying it using the adjective 'average'. This description makes the character relatable to the audience as if the character can be any one of the girls watching despite all the heroic things that she is capable of. The character emphasizes that she is capable of doing anything by mentioning her own name 'Kim possible' early in the intro. The name indicates that whatever the character mentions in the rest of the intro, she actually can do. Her name represents limitless power.

The **Arabic** version uses the same phrasing as the English. It uses the in a positive way to establish the character as regular. this 'عادية' description of ' ' which means 'مستحيل' as the character, which sounds like 'دامو ستحيل' version uses 'impossible'. This is probably has been done for the rhythmical effect. The character still commits to doing all the heroic things.

4.1.2 Representing Actions/Events/States

The lyrics focus on using relational verbs to present a stable description, emphasizing that these qualities are an integral part of the character's personalities. For example, the intensive relation 'I'm your average girl' emphasizes that what she is able to do can be done by anyone else.

The circumstantial relation 'I am here to save the world' situates the character as being always very near and ready. The same idea is re-emphasized by 'I am on my way', when 'danger calls'.

Many material verbs are used such as 'page me', 'call me' and 'page me', all of which emphasize the intentionality of the idea that the character is ready to help at all times she is needed.

The use of the mental perception verb 'hear' in 'I hear my cell phone ring' suggests that even when the situation is unexpected and imposed on her, she is still able to respond.

In the Arabic version, the use of the material verbs in 'وأحمي كل البلاد' and 'أموحى' represents concrete actions that happens in the real world. They are intentional showing intervention and effort.

4.1.3 Equating and Contrasting

The lyrics employs intensive relational equivalence in the first line 'I'm your basic average girl'. This line is to be taken as the truth, she is after all just an ordinary girl despite being capable of heroic actions. Which sends a message to listener that every girl is capable of doing these action too. This construction is also found in the Arabic version, 'أنا بنت عادية', giving the same effect despite the lack of the auxiliary verb in Arabic.

There is also the parallel construction 'call me, beep me' which uses equivalent wording and syntax. It can be easily memorised. Again, such repetition can leave an impact on the listener, emphasizing the power of the character. The 'call me, beep me' is not found in the Arabic version. Nevertheless, other parallelisms can be found such as 'كل مكان وكل زمان'. This line, again, highlights that the character is available at all times and wherever she is needed. This can send the message that

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all girls, regardless of when and where, can also do the same things. The other
, sets the idea that a 'basic average girl is لا خوف لا خطر على جنس البشر structure is '
capable of protecting every single person.

4.1.4 Prioritizing

In 'when danger calls.. Just know that I am on my way', the pain piece of
information is foregrounded in the main clause, shifting the focus to the focal idea
which is that the character will be coming for help despite the time in which the
danger occur.

In 'If you just call my name, Kim Possible', the character makes her name the
focal idea in the line. This highlights her as a reliable person who doesn't care who
or what causes the danger of trouble as in 'It doesn't matter where or when there's
trouble', the agent is removed focusing on the 'trouble' itself.

The main clause is also prioritized in 'Doesn't matter if it's day or
night...Everything is gonna be alright', making her promise of better condition for
her listeners is the focal point of the line.

, prioritize 'm', which أنا بنت عادية .. وأحمي كل البلاد In the Arabic version, the line '
emphasize her protective role, rather than focusing of her being an ordinary girl.
The ' أنا لا أرتاح كي يرتاح كل بال' is foregrounded in 'في كل زمان وكل مكان .. أنا لا أرتاح
, emphasizing her character as selfless, she thinks of other people's كي يرتاح كل بال
safety before hers.

4.1.5 Implying and Assuming

In the English version, 'You can't stop me cause I'm Kim Possible' implies that
her own identity and inner power are the things that prevent other stopping her

doing the right thing and protecting others. The lyrics also emphasizes the her unlimited power in 'There is nothing I can't do'.

The 'And when danger calls, just know that I am on my way' provides a factive presupposition that the character is always on her way to help. this presupposition is a form ensuring those who are in need of help that she is available whenever there is danger. The same idea is also repeated in 'Call me, beep me if you wanna reach me', that she is always available whenever someone call her for help. The ' , which اسمي بسرعة أليبي same idea is repeated in the Arabic version in the line ' also state the idea that she will come to help quickly.

In both the English and Arabic version the lines ' I'm your basic average ' implicates أنا بنت عادية .. وأحمي كل البلاد girl...And I'm here to save the world' and ' that an ordinary girl is capable of saving the world, which can lead us to the conclusion that since they can save the world, they are able to make their own decisions and be responsible for their own lives.

' implicate that she is capable of facing لا أستصعب الأمور، قلبي دوما جسور The ' challenging situations but she doesn't find them difficult due to her bravery. 'm' presupposes that she will sacrifice her own piece of mind for the safety of others.

In addition , the character is widely known by everyone placing her as a role model for everyone. This idea is suggested by ' اسمي على كل لسان .

4.1.6 Negation

'Can't' in 'You can't stop me cause I'm Kim Pos-si-ble' shows her determination that no one can stop due only to being herself. The idea is reinforced in by using the double negation in the line 'm' to show the there is no limit what she is able to do.

Negation also removes time restriction in 'Doesn't matter if it's day or night' and 'it doesn't matter when and where', suggesting availability at all times.

Characterising her as constant and steady.

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‘I just can't wait until I hear my cell phone ring’ present her as someone who wants others to ask her for help. this can imply selflessness and that she is a part of community.

’ also uses two negations placed *لا.. مستحيل* أرثجف أخافIn the Arabic version, the ‘ at the end of the line to highlight the unlikeliness of her to be scared of anything. Her protective role is restated through negation in ‘m’ ensuring others no to fear as long as she is there.

4.2 Sailor Moon (English and Arabic)

Usagi Tsukino, a girl in her teenage years, is given a power to become Sailor Moon. Her job was to protect earth from danger with the help of Luna the cat. It was first aired in North America in 1995. The English lyrics were extracted from the website *Lyrics Translate*. The Arabic version was extracted from YouTube and transcribed by the researcher.

4.2.1 Naming and Describing

In the English version, the intro mentions the character’s name ‘Sailor moon’ multiple times in order to establish her as the hero who is ready to fight and defend.

In the Arabic version, the lyrics mention the the character is created from the ‘ and that is *اشقراء* light of moon and emphasize the idea by mentioning that she is ‘ enlighten the sky.

’ can be interpreted to mean the *القمر* ‘ in the line *كان القمر في اعلى القمة* The word ‘ character who hold the same name. the use of wording highlight the characher status as the person in top.

‘In ‘ suggest the her magical power is from a light source to القمر ‘
enlight the lives of other and that this light is employed for the good of people, as it
mentioned in ‘تساعد من يقع في خطر .’

‘The lyrics describe her steps as shooting stars in ‘خطواتها كشهب الكون ,’
emphasising her as someone burning to light the life others.

4.2.2 Representing Actions/Events/States

‘Fighting’, ‘winning’ and running’ all are material process that indicate intention
and willingness. Such type of verbs present her as a hero who is capable of making
her own decision.

‘With her collective scouts to help fight’ suggest that this action is a collective
effort witch indicates unity and and a sense of community.
‘نعيد نصرا نعيد السلام’, ‘نحمي الارض’, the Arabic version also uses material verbs like ‘
, and ‘تحارب الشر’ . All suggests that what she does is concrete and can be seen in
reality.

4.1.3 Equating and Contrasting

The repetition of ‘She is the one named sailor moon’ equate her a well-known
hero, using a relational verb to further emphasize the idea.
The listing of the other characters, ‘Sailor Venus, Sailor Mercury, Sailor Mars,
Sailor Jupiter,’ equates all the characters as being equally significant, which
removes the idea of hierarchy. This highlights that heroic acts are not limited to a
specific character and that anyone can do it.

4.2.4 Prioritizing

In the English version, ‘She is the one on whom we can depend’ clearly stresses
one of her most important qualities, she is a person you can depend on. Placing this
characteristic at the end of the the sentence draws more attention to this quality.

Moreover, the use of a more complex structure in ‘ she is the one named Sailor
Moon’, rather than simply using her name is Sailor Moon, draws more attention to
her and situates her as the focal point.

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' is foregrounded multiple times, situated last **نحمي الارض من الشر** In the Arabic, ' in lines. Emphasising her mission to protect every one.

4.2.5 Implying and Assuming

The line 'm' presupposes the existence of the character and by using 'the one' sets the character as a legendary person known by everyone. Also in 'm', reinforces the idea of her of her being the only who is reliable.

'Never running from a real fight' suggests that she has faced fights before and that she is able to overcome them.

'fighting evil by moonlight' is normally something associated with male character. This reinforces the character as equal to male counterparts. And at the same time she is associated with 'love' which suggests that she still holds on to her femininity.

' implies that she is light fast and effective in her pursue as **خطواتها كشهب الكون** protector. The character is also portrayed as some in high position that sheds light on others as in **كان القمر في أعلى القمة**.

4.2.6 Negations

The English version utilises negation in two instances, 'Never running from a real fight' and 'She will never turn her back on a friend,' using 'never' to signal that what comes after will never happen. In the first instant the lyrics presents the character as a real fighter no matter how difficult, she will never give up or let

others down. And the same idea is repeated in the second instance, emphasising her as a reliable friend and not just a hero.

' highlights a never ending power and light يسحر لا ينضب In the Arabic version, ' صدقتها كنز لا يفنى ' that enlighten the lives of others. This idea is also emphasized in ' ' , characterising her as a lovable person that everybody يسأم منها and ' wants to be with for her own personality, rather than just her power.

4.3 Discussion of the Results

This study analyses the portrayal of women's empowerment in cartoon theme songs using critical stylistic approaches in the English and Arabic versions of Kim Possible and Sailor Moon.

The findings indicated that by utilising critical stylistic tools such as naming, describing, and portraying events, the songs effectively portrayed the female protagonists as powerful, responsible, and perpetually accessible. Consequently, they portray the characters as exemplars for young audiences and emphasise that heroic attributes transcend gender limitations.

The study demonstrates that in varied cultural contexts, both the English and Arabic versions utilise critical stylistics to attain comparable results. The focus on accessibility, valour, and selflessness enhances the strength of the female characters. Each variation employs distinct cultural and language characteristics to imply that the characters are both ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. Moreover, examining empowerment via stylistic tools in cartoon lyrics has a unique role, especially from a critical stylistic perspective, as it aids in uncovering the underlying ideas aimed at younger audiences. This study aims to elucidate how literary elements such as denial, presupposition, and foregrounding influence empowerment narratives. The study reveals that, despite cultural differences, the message of women's competence and autonomy is preserved in both the English and Arabic versions.

5. Conclusion

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The concept of women empowerment can be found in a variety of text types, including cartoon theme songs, that are mainly directed to children. As language can be a tool of empowerment it was necessary to uncover this concept in cartoon theme songs.

In the analysis of both the English and Arabic versions of Kim Possible and Sailor Moon, the concept of women empowerment is apparent in the lyrics, although different approaches are taken to achieve it. Both versions, the English and Arabic, of the theme songs utilise the six tools of Jeffries' model. The concept of women empowerment is contestant throughout the Arabic versions and the English versions, despite the different cultures.

One of the main themes that run throughout the songs, was that an average girl is capable of heroic actions, sending a clear message that everyone is also able to achieve such power. In both theme songs, the idea of defending the community is apparent in the text, setting the idea that those powers are used to empower others. The Arabic versions of the songs view empowerment as a selfless duty, focusing on the characters being part of a community. The English version focuses on her being an individual. Despite the differences in strategies, the core idea remains intact, women are heroes and capable of change and protection.

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أنا بنت عادية .. وأحمي كل البلاد
أخاف أرتجف لا .. مستحيل
لا أستصعب الأمور .. قلبي دوما جسور
صوت النجدة ألتني
لا يهم أين أو متى الخطر .. نادني باسمي
دامو ستحيل
اذكر اسمي بسرعة ألبني ..
أمحو الخطر من دربي
ذاك إخلاصي مع حبي ..
اذكر اسمي بسرعة ألبني
اذكر اسمي بسرعة ألبني
في كل زمان وكل مكان ..
أنا لا أرتاح كي يرتاح كل بال
لا خوف لا خطر على جنس البشر ..
اسمي على كل لسان
دامو ستحيل
اذكر اسمي بسرعة ألبني

Appendix

1Kim Possible Intro (English and Arabic)

Ooh, yeah, yeah
I'm your basic average girl
And I'm here to save the world
You can't stop me cause I'm
Kim Pos-si-ble
There is nothing I can't do
And when danger calls

Just know that I am on my way
(Know that I am on my way)
It doesn't matter where or when there's trouble
If you just call my name, Kim Possible
Call me, beep me if you wanna reach me
When you wanna page me, it's okay
I just can't wait until
I hear my cell phone ring
Doesn't matter if it's day or night
Everything is gonna be alright
Whenever you need me, baby
Call me, beep me if you wanna reach me
(Kim here, so what's the sitch?)

2 Sailor Moon (English and Arabic)

Fighting evil by moonlight
Winning love by daylight
Never running from a real fight
She is the one named Sailor Moon

She will never turn her back on a friend
She is always there to defend
She is the one on whom we can depend
She is the one named Sailor...

...Sailor Venus
...Sailor Mercury
...Sailor Mars
...Sailor Jupiter

Secret powers
All so new to her
She is the one named Sailor Moon

Fighting evil by moonlight
Winning love by daylight
With her Sailor Scouts to help fight
She is the one named Sailor Moon
She is the one named Sailor Moon
She is the one...Sailor Moon!

تحت سماء الليل والظلمة .. كان القمر في اعلى
القمة

يضيء الليل يشع جما كي نحمي الارض من
الشر

بين نجما ونجم كنا... بين الكواكب لكم جننا
شهاب امل اضاء لونا... حول الكواكب حلم دار
بأمانينا معنا نشدوا كالأطياف... نعيد نصرا نعيد
السلام

تحت سماء الليل والظلمة .. كان القمر في اعلى
القمة

يضيء الليل يشع جما... كي نحمي الارض من
الشر

يسحر لا ينضب .. كي نحمي الارض من الشر

فتاة خلقت من ضوء القمر تساعد من يقع في خطر
شقراء تضيع نجوم الليل خطواتها كشهب الكون
أتسأل هل سمعتم عنها من يعرفها لا يسئم منها
صداقتها كنز لا يفنى فهي بحارة كوكب القمر
تحارب الشر في منتصف الليل تنير بردائها
فتاة خلقت من ضوء القمر تساعد من يقع في خطر
شقراء تضيع نجوم الليل خطواتها كشهب الكون