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Language, Power and Resilience: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Patty Dan's *Department of English Language and Literature*

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Abstract

This study critically examines the construction of dominance and resistance in the animated Netflix series Mermaids Magic (2024) characters Mermaids and Barbarossa from the episode - A volcanic Adventure‖ through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), by using Teun A. van Dijk 's socio-cognitive model. It is based on the premise that fictional and mythological narratives are ideologically neutral and work as cultural sites where power relations and ideological meanings are produced, negotiated, and naturalized through language. The research adopts a qualitative design and applies close textual analysis to selected dialogues and narrative sequences. Purposive sampling is used to identify instances where discourse reflects ideological positioning of authority and opposition. The theoretical framework of Van Dijk 's socio-cognitive approach, emphasizing the relationship between discourse, cognition, and ideology. Findings indicate that the character Barbarossa constructs dominance through directive speech acts, assertive lexical choices, and hierarchical framing that legitimizes authority and control. In contrast, the Mermaids construct resistance through collective identity, solidarity-based discourse, and counter-ideological narratives that challenge hegemonic power structures. These opposing discourses reveal systematic ideological polarization within the narrative. The study further shows that mythological and fantasy elements function that both naturalize and contest power relations. Through lexical selection, narrative positioning, and symbolic representation, the text shapes mental models that influence audience perceptions of authority, legitimacy, and resistance. The study concludes that Mermaids and Barbarossa have a discursive space of resilience where dominance and resistance are continuously constructed and negotiated. It contributes to CDA research study by extending socio-cognitive analysis to animated fantasy discourse and highlights the ideological significance of popular myth-based narratives in shaping social cognition.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, socio-cognitive model, resistance, dominancy

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Introduction

Language is an important social communication tool through which meanings are created. Ideologies and power relations are constructed and maintained. In modern linguistic and cultural theories, discourse plays a key role in the construction of social realities. Scholars like Barthes (1972) and Eagleton (1991) argue that myths serve as vehicles of ideology which conceals the historically and socially constructed relations of power as the universal truths (Barthes, 1972, pp. 109–111, 142; Eagleton, 1991). It entrenches a clear ideological battle between power and resistance, authority and opposition.

❖ Language, Power, and Resilience

The relationship between language and power is a fundamental concern of Critical Discourse Analysis because language is used to construct and dominant representations. The socio-cognitive approach proposed by van Dijk highlights the relationship between social structures and individual cognition to demonstrate discourse that connects broader systems of power with the ways individuals respond to their circumstances. In Mermaid Magic, power is frequently constructed through linguistic representations of hierarchy, authority, vulnerability, and social differences. Thus, the struggle represented through language in Mermaid Magic has dominant meanings. It involves the capacity of characters to contest, reinterpret, and survive conditions of inequality and constraint.

❖ Myth, Animation, and Resilience Representation

Levi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, pp. 208–209) considers myth a system of meaning through which cultural contradictions and social tensions represented and negotiated. Campbell (Campbell, 2008, pp. 81–90) emphasizes the role of myth in presenting transformative journeys through which individuals confront challenges and achieve personal or collective growth. Consequently, animated myths function as important cultural spaces for representing resilience and demonstrate the characters that respond to authority, oppression, exclusion, and other forms of adversity.

Through Critical Discourse Analysis, these representations examined to identify language, characterization, narrative structures, and visual meanings construct

resilience and communicate possibilities of resistance, adaptation, and empowerment.

Mostly, the research study is based on Critical Discourse Analysis that discussed political speeches, media speeches, and institutional communication. Mythical and animated stories have received comparatively little consideration from ideological perspectives. Thus, the study described the growing interest of interdisciplinary investigation combining linguistics, literature, and cultural studies. It supports the opinion that fictional stories act as significant cultural texts, which influence the understanding of power, identity, and opposition.

Mythical and animated stories are considered ideologically neutral, imaginative, and a source of entertainment. However, these are silently damaging with logical thoughts and encourage them to maintain power relations, social hierarchies, and group identities. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has demonstrated that discourse is a core element that shows that dominance is produced and reproduced. The research gap that specifically incorporates the socio-cognitive framework provided by van Dijk to investigate the construction of mental models, ideological beliefs and social representations in the context of mythical interactions between the dominant and the resistant discourses.

This study is significant due to the socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) implemented to mythical and animated texts which is an area that has received limited attention in CDA research. The study encourages a critical reading of animated narratives to build through language that shapes perceptions of power, authority, and resistance. It demonstrates that CDA is significantly applied to fictional narratives, thereby expanding discourse studies and new research possibilities in linguistics, literature, cultural studies, and media studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, pp. 5–8).

The research is confined to the qualitative discourse analysis method, which focuses on interpreting words and meaning as well as the social environment, instead of quantification. It focuses on the selected fragments of text in Mermaids and Barbarossa as the main sources, which offer feasible and consistent data to thoroughly investigate. The speeches explore the interpretation, quantitative linguistic analysis, which is not under the qualitative paradigm, or comparative analysis.

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Review of the Literature

It explores insights regarding the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), ideology, power relations, and narrative discourse to provide a context to the analysis of fantasy-based animated narratives. The chapter discussed the creation and key tenets of CDA with specific reference to the works of Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak who have emphasized the power of discourse to create and sustain social power and ideological systems. The socio-cognitive framework created by Teun A. van Dijk describes the interaction between discourse and social cognition and mental models to influence ideological knowledge among viewers. This chapter provides the conceptual background of the current research and the current literature gaps that will determine the importance of the study through synthesis of these theoretical perspectives along with past empirical research. Since narratives influence the people and construct their realities, literary discourse that has become such a potent means that produces and disseminates cultural meanings within society (Eagleton, 1991, pp. 1–2; Fairclough, 1995, pp. 2–5).

❖ Literature, Resilience, and the Representation of Social Reality

As various scholars argue, narratives illustrate the economic, social, cultural, and political forces that influence human relationships as well as issues such as power, authority, inequality, resistance, and social conflict. Literary narratives often present more straightforward illustrations of social processes, thus making it easier to understand social conditions intellectually and emotionally. Thus, literature can be seen as a medium of culture bridging social values, norms, struggles, and resilience through narrative (Baker, 2006, pp. 1–5).

According to the resilience paradigm, literature is important to depict the conditions of hardship, and individuals and societies deal with these. For instance, characters face expression, difference, inequality and loss, but their reactions often reflect persistence, adjustment, resistance, cooperation, agency, etc. Eagleton (Eagleton, 1991, pp. 1–5) argues that literature is connected to social and cultural structures through which human understanding about the world is created. Though Eagleton is concerned mainly with ideology, it is still relevant for understanding literature as a reflection of power, hierarchy, and society.

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❖ The Magical School Trope in Fantasy Narratives

The magical school has become one of the most familiar tropes of modern fantasy literature and media. The fact that this trope is so popular in contemporary fantasy indicates educational settings that turned into fantasy worlds where mythological themes, social forces, and self-development meet in a systematic narrative framework (Mendlesohn, 2008, pp. 1–2). The magical school trope offers a narrative structure to study power relationships and institutional power in fictional worlds as well. Magical school stories address more ideological issues related to the validity of authority, the proper application of power, and the influence of education on moral values and the character of a leader through these narrative conflicts (Attebery, 2014, pp. 9–19).

The form of magical school stories helps to create episodic narrative styles that reflect the educational sequence of the students in the school. Every step of the educational process related to new lessons, challenges, or experiences that lead to the development of the protagonist. This episodic pattern offers a definite narrative development and enables exploration of various themes and conflicts at various points in the story. This leads to the educational structure of the magical school being strongly integrated with the plot of the story (Mendlesohn, 2008, pp. 1–2).

The school setting frequently fosters friendships, competitions, mentorships, and alliances, which define the emotional and social aspects. Such relationships significantly contribute to the lead character development, as they offer support, opposition or moral counsel in times of crisis. These interpersonal relationships allow the magical school stories to address the issue of loyalty, cooperation and trust as well as the significance of community in shaping of individual identity and collective opposition against hostile forces (Attebery, 2014, pp. 9–19).

❖ Myth, Resilience, and Fantasy Narratives

In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), myth perceived as a traditional folklore and signifying system that translates this cultural or social experience. Barthes (Barthes, 1972, pp. 109–111) claimed that myth is historically constructed into something that appears both natural and therefore familiar. From resilience point of view, fantasy stories use symbols and imagination to reflect the experience of adversity. Strange

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settings, figurative characters, and struggles between opposing forces contribute to narrative environments favorable for endurance and resistance analysis.

According to Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, pp. 208–209) myth enables the human mind to construct frameworks for dealing with cultural contradictions. As a result, mythic narratives allow people to connect their personal hard times to the broader cultural understanding of survival, resistance, counterpressure, and collective power. The text level asks us to analyze how resilience is shown through recurring storylines and character development, as well as with the help of different types of imagery and language structures. In this respect, van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory can help to explain the links between social discourse, cognition, and social experience.

Literary stories are the sources of amusement but also cultural contexts in which social situations, power relations, resistances, and resilience are presented and negotiated. Studying conflicts in literature and fantasy texts when characters react to domination, inequality, injustice, exclusion, and other issues. Jorgensen and Phillips (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 7–9) tated that social realities are created and continued through discourse and communication which highlights that language inherently possesses no neutrality. Using resilience as the framework, the conflicts between characters or individuals considered in the context of the battles for power, vulnerability, equality, justice, resistance, and agency.

- **Language, Discourse and Power**

The interdependence among language, discourse, and power are studied extensively in the field of linguistics, sociology, and literature. Language is a simple, neutral tool applied to deliver information. It is a social practice that determines the people view authority, identity and social hierarchy. Scholars believe that language is deeply rooted in social forms and ideological systems. Discourse supported and confronted the status quo by employing diction, syntax, framing of narratives, and rhetorical techniques.

Norman Fairclough discusses the language and power by considering that discourse exists in linguistic, social, and institutional simultaneously. Fairclough believes that discourse helps to construct social identities, social relations, and knowledge systems. There is an essential element of language which acts in depicting power

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and status in literary works. People who enjoy the status of power usually communicate in an assertive way, giving commands and using persuasive speech forms; meanwhile, the subordinates either avoid speaking at all or use indirect language forms. The patterns of speech and description of events in relation to various characters reveal that language creates social hierarchy and power in literary discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 7–9).

The discursive power concept also emphasizes that language influence social identities and cultural perceptions. Discourse classifies and judges individuals as well as groups in social structures. The descriptive language in a story, which relate some characters to positive attributes like wisdom, bravery or legitimacy and others that become dangerous, irrational and inferior. These discursive strategies tend to influence feelings of characters in literary work and it perceive conflicts of the narratives. Consequently, language has been turned into a potent tool of the creation of cultural identities and the justification of specific social arrangements (Huckin, 2002, pp. 155– 176).

- **Dominance and Hegemony in Narrative Discourse**

The use of descriptive language, metaphorical imagery, as well as narrative framing helps to shape the perceptions of social reality in readers. This type of figurative language often serves to reinforce ideological definitions by linking some characters or actions with desirable qualities in a culture. With these forms of stylistic devices, literature conveys complicated ideological messages in a manner that sound natural or beyond challenge.

Moreover, ideological framing of conflict and resolution is used to reinforce hegemony. Narrative conflicts tend to be framed in a manner that justifies dominant ideologies as being a solution to chaos, disorder, or moral ambiguity. Although, there is resistance or rebellion in the stories that tends to get absorbed within the dominant frames of ideology. This process represents the idea by

Gramsci (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 58–59), that hegemony functions through absorption to show resistance in a manner that ends up perpetuating the status quo of power.

Van Dijk (Van Dijk, 1998, pp. 78–89, 228–235) describes the shared mental models that perpetuate dominance and hegemony being influenced by repetition of

exposure to discourse. Literary and media texts filled the vacuum by creating cultural industries which influence their ideological orientation.

❖ Resistance in Narrative Discourse

In the context of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), resistance is conceived as a simple opposition act as well as a discursive practice that arises in the context of using language, positioning a narrative and representation symbolically. Jorgensen and Phillips (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 7–9) argue that discourse is always a place of conflict in which rival meanings are discussed, and resistance is central to this conflict, especially when the texts are a representation of conflict between authority and marginalized groups.

The use of language as a form of indirect resistance to authority and dominant ideologies is called linguistic resistance. Often, characters use techniques such as irony, sarcasm, ambiguity, and indirect speech to highlight power structures without directly confronting them. Van Dijk (Van Dijk, 1998, pp. 78–89) argues that discourse is also an exercise of resistance against power structures which is often created through efforts to reclaim control over language and representation.

❖ Analytical Approaches to Discourse in Narrative Studies

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become one of the most powerful theoretical and methodological approaches to studying the interaction of language, power and ideology in modern literature. In contrast to the traditional approaches to linguistics, which mostly concentrate on the grammatical frameworks or stylistic characteristics, the CDA approach focuses on the social and ideological aspects of discourse. Discourse enables social groups to build authority, legitimize some ideologies and marginalize others. Consequently, CDA tries to reveal the latent ideological meanings built in language structures and narrative representations (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 76–78).

- **Discursive Practice and Social Context**

The first premise of CDA that discourse is socially constructed and is one of the key assumptions. This implies that language is both shaped by social organization in terms of institutions, cultural norms and ideological beliefs and plays a role in

reproducing or altering the social structure. Discourse is a mirror reality that takes part in social reality construction. Fairclough argues that discourse exists within webs of social practices which shape the way people understand the sense of authority, identity and social relations. With the use of repetition in language usage, some ideas and values get normalized in the society and defined as legitimate and power in the society. Through these discursive patterns, scholars determine the hegemonic ideologies are perpetuated and other viewpoints that can be formed in the cultural discourse (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 76–78).

❖ Visual and Narrative Meaning in Animated Storytelling

Over the past few years, the discourse analysis concept has been extended beyond the analysis of written or spoken language to the analysis of various semiotic resources used in meaning-making in communication. This has led to Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) which is a technique of studying the interrelationship between various modes of discourse including language, images, color, sound, gesture and space arrangement to create meaning in texts and media. This viewpoint highlights the specific opinions in the analysis of visual narratives, digital storytelling, animated series, as well as graphic texts, where both visual and linguistic components interact in ways that make up complex worlds of narratives (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 1–6).

- **Semiotic Resources in Visual Narratives**

Multimodal discourse analysis is based on social semiotic theory which perceives communication as a socially constructed process where people make meaning with the help of the available semiotic resources in particular cultural situations. Social semiotic theorists believe that visual imagery mode, typography, color, and spatial design are important sign systems which carry ideological and cultural meanings. For example, the visual elements including framing, perspective and composition can affect the perception of the viewers of the relationships between characters and events. As these visual elements meet the linguistic narration or dialogue they play a role in creating multiple layers of meaning that cannot be analyzed through linguistic means only (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 1–6).

The framework of analyzing images and visual communication as proposed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 1–6) is one

of the most significant contributions to multi-modal analysis. Multimodal discourse analysis offers a methodological approach to studying the role of images in the meaning of narratives and ideology through these analytical categories (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 1–6)

Language provides linguistic details of characters and events in dialogue, narration, emotional mood, space, and symbolism that are given through visual imagery. Ideological meanings achieved through the design of characters, color symbolism and even visual depiction of settings to say about power, morality or cultural identity. The other significant aspect of multimodal discourse analysis is the analysis of semiotic resources and meaning-making practices in cultural narratives. According to Jewitt et al. (Jewitt, 2009, pp. 14–27). Semiotic resources are the means and tools that communicate through which communicators create meaning, as in visual design, sound effects, gestures, and spatial arrangements. They are tactically interwoven in media stories to manage viewer interpretation and emotional involvement. For example, background music is used for the emotional effect of a narrative scene, whereas camera angles or visual framing can be used to emphasize the power or frailty of certain characters.

The interdependence of modes in the creation of narrative meaning is also a focus in multimodal discourse analysis. Instead of operating separately, both linguistic and visual elements generally interrelate to create consistent images of events and characters. As an example, a scene in which a heroic figure is portrayed by a combination of verbal praise, visual framing and symbolic imagery to enhance the moral authority of the character. On the other hand, hostile characters depicted by darker color schemes, intimidating postures, or negative language. Through such interactions, studies help to determine the role of multimodal discourse in the creation of cultural myths and archetypes of narratives (Kress, 2010, pp. 159–170).

The use of visual symbolism, characterization, and audiovisual effects in animated series, films, and texts in digital media forms is essential to convey narrative and ideological messages. The linguistic dialogue in such narratives is a part of a larger semiotic system which incorporates music, animation, and visual composition. Multimodal analysis helps to study the interaction between these various components to create a narrative meaning and lead viewers to interpretation.

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Multimodal discourse analysis combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in literary and media research has offered researchers an effective methodological tool to study the way narrative texts reflect ideological struggles and social power dynamics. Although CDA is more interested in language and its functions in forming ideological meanings, multimodal analysis adds to this point of view by exploring the role of visual and audiovisual components in the process. Combined, these methods enable scholars to study the ways in which narratives establish representations of power, opposition, identity, and cultural values using several semiotic mediums.

This composite approach has gained more significance in the analysis of modern narratives that intertwine linguistic, visual, and digital types of narratives (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 1–6).

- **Discursive Strategies of Representation in Fantasy Narratives**

A critical review of current literature on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), ideology, power, and narrative discourse illustrates an extensive theoretical base that has been developed by authors like Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. Institutional and formal discourses- political speeches, media coverage, educational writing- have been the major object of their work where the relations of power are explicitly expressed in the form of recognizable linguistic forms. Although feminist, structuralist, or postcolonial approaches to literary texts have been frequently used, the use of CDA to discuss animated fantasy narratives is still underrepresented.

- **Research Gap**

A significant weakness of the current research is related to the limited use of the sociocognitive model developed by Teun A. van Dijk to fantasy discourse and animated storytelling. Despite its general applicability in the literature on news media and political communication, little research has been conducted on its application to narrative fiction, especially in mythological or fantasy-based texts. The socio-cognitive approach focuses on the interaction between discourse structures, social cognition, and ideological mental models, which is why it is especially applicable to study the way audiences internalize meanings of fictional narratives.

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Methodology

The purpose of the study is to examine dominance, resistance, and resilience as described through the language of Mermaids and Barbarossa in "Mermaids Magic" characters. A qualitative research design based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and combined with the socio-cognitive model by Teun A. van Dijk, which focuses on the interconnection between Discourse, resilience, and social cognition. This chapter also describes the narrative textual information, which is systematically analyzed to identify discursive strategies, including ideological polarization, presupposition, and narrative framing.

Patty Dann is a well-known American author wrote a popular novel titled "Mermaids" in 1986 which is the base writing of the Netflix series. The study is based on the Netflix series "Mermaids Magic" (2024), directed by Iginio Straffi, Guy Bar'ely, and Viky Lopez Amores.

❖ Research Design

The current study design is a qualitative research study. This study emphasizes the role of language as the instrument of power and opposition in the story of Mermaids Magic. The research is based on the analysis of resilience, group identities, and discursive strategies employed by characters. Qualitative study focuses on contextual knowledge, close reading, and interpretive description, which are the core of analysis for meaning making and negotiation processes within a discourse.
The methodological approach used in this study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is an interdisciplinary research method that studies linguistic and social relationships among language, power, and resilience. The CDA used in the context of this study is to analyze the characters, Barbarossa serves as an embodiment of authority and control with the help of linguistic actions of command, threats, and ownership. In contrast, the language used by Mermaids is the symbol of solidarity, resistance, and collective identity. Using the socio-cognitive approach by Teun A. van Dijk, the study bridges the gap between textual analysis and ideological systems that influence audiences who perceive power dynamics in the text.

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Theoretical Framework

The current research is based on the socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that was constructed by Teun A. van Dijk. This model suggests that language is not a neutral means of communication but a strong social means by which ideologies are formed, perpetuated, and disputed.

The socio-cognitive model is premised on the interplay of three dimensions; Discourse, Cognition, and Society. These dimensions work in conjunction to clarify the role of language in production and reproduction of power and resilience. To begin with,

- **Discourse**

Discourse is defined as the language that is used in social contexts, that is spoken and written language. Discourse in CDA is viewed as a type of social practice, where meanings, identities, and power relations are conveyed.

- **Cognition**

The second element of the model is Cognition, which is the mental processes involved in the interpretation and comprehension of discourse by individuals. Van Dijk believes that individuals do not receive language passively, rather, they process language in the form of mental representations called mental models.

- **Society**

The third dimension is Society, which is reflective of the larger social arrangements and power relations in which discourse happens. Inequality, hierarchy, and dominance among various groups are often the features of social systems. According to Van Dijk, discourse is a reflection and enforcing of these structures.

One of the key concepts of the socio-cognitive model is ideology. Ideologies refer to common belief systems that shape the identity, values, and interests of specific social groups. This theoretical approach is especially applicable to "Mermaid Magic's" characters analysis. The story depicts an evident contrast of the powers and subjugated groups, in which power is predominantly used by means of discourse

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and not through physical means. The figure of Barbarossa is an embodiment of authoritative power and ideological superiority and employs language to take control, rationalize power, and enforce hierarchy. Conversely, the speech of the Mermaids is an indication of defiance and a violation of the right to power. This study examines the interactions between these groups of people in linguistic exchanges to create and reproduce power relations in the narrative through the socio-cognitive framework.

- **Data collection**

The primary source of data is the Netflix animated series "Mermaid Magic" (2024) by Iginio Straffi and produced by Rainbow Group. The mermaid characters named (Merlinda, Nerissa, and Sasha) and Barbarossa are the villains of the story. The information is primarily in the form of dialogues, conversations, and critical moments of the story where the characters assert authority, power, resistance, and ideological perspectives. This study examines the Discourse of dominance and opposition in the story. The special focus is on the language employed by the characters, such as conflict, decision-making, and the interaction between groups.

In this research, the collection of data was based on a purposive sampling technique. The scenes and dialogues that are directly related to the objectives of the research are selected to be analyzed. The purposive sampling was used to ensure that the chosen data appropriately represent problems related to power relations, ideological conflict, and group representation, which are the focus of the study. The conversations of Barbarossa that thrive on authority, command, control, and dominance over others are focused. Meanwhile, dialogues of the Mermaids are selected to present resistance, opposition, uniting, and forming collective identity. These reactions are counter-discourses to the dominant ideology offered by Barbarossa and are based on the conflict between authority and resistance in the story.

Data Analysis

The selected data from the Netflix animated series "Mermaid Magic" (2024) focusing on Episode seven, "A Volcanic Adventure" is analyzed in this chapter. The analysis examines the ways in which the language, discourse and multimodal features of narration develop the theme of domination and resistance between Barbarossa,

Merlinda, the Mermaids, the Guardian Octopus, Fred, Fred's father and other supporting players. The chapter examines the relation of power, authority, ideology and group identity through linguistic, visual and narrative structures in the lens of the socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Teun A. van Dijk.

The episode is about the search for lost magical pearls in a sleeping volcano. Merlinda and her friends try to find the pearls and restore the equilibrium of the undersea world while Barbarossa tries to take them for himself. The conflict escalates as the Guardian Octopus gets involved, and the scientific investigations undertaken by Fred, as well as the greed of Fred's father, come into play, leading up to the volcanic eruption which is the climax of the story. Such episodes are not just adventurous but also serve as ideological sites of negotiation on competing beliefs about authority, ownership, cooperation, responsibility, and justice through their discourses.

- **Dominant Language of Barbarossa**

The power of rhetoric in Mermaid Magic is most evident in the language of Barbarossa, who appears to be in complete command of language throughout, and is characterized by the themes of authority, greed, intimidation, and the pursuit of total control. Barbarossa is the main antagonist throughout the narrative of A Volcanic Adventure which is trying to claim the magical pearls that are needed to restore Mertropia. It also presents a new ideology of Barbarossa, who is obsessed with controlling the magical pearls. When he is watching his sea creatures come back from another raid, he angrily states, "You best not be returning without my prize." He then says, "Excellent. Just one more of these oyster beds to raid. I'll have all the pearls and Mertropia".

At the same time the contrastive clause "Mertropia will have none" creates a sharp contrast between the strong "self" and the "weak" other. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, the lexical selections made by Barbarossa lend support to the idea of unequal access to resources, in that deprivation of others is a necessary cost to Barbarossa's own ambitions.

Barbarossa's speech is also evidence of his power beyond mere material control: his political control. As he is leaving, Tempesta tells him, "You should absorb the power

from these pearls now; you'll be invincible". But no, Barbarossa replies smartly, "I'll swallow them when I'm ready to swallow then bait for the trap I will set". Barbarossa does not act impulsively but rather treats power as something that is best managed, used to subjugate others. The word "bait" changes the meaning of magical pearls from symbols of protection to tools of deception and control.

Barbarossa's constant creation of enemies continues the discourse of domination. Immediately he feels Merlinda near the last oyster bed; he angrily says, "She must not have her hands on those pearls. Later, when they're facing off, he escalates his aggression by stating, "I'll be taking those pearls, princess. And so is your life force!" The words of these utterances show not only that Barbarossa wants the pearls, but also that he wants to wipe out any resistance.

- **Lexicalization of Power and Authority**

In Critical Discourse Analysis, lexicalization is defined as the conscious use of words that have specific connotations of ideology and influence the way that an audience reads about the social world (Tannen). In Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, frequent lexical selections are linked to the development of mental models for the specific values and social identities associated with specific characters. In A Volcanic Adventure, Barbarossa continually uses words that rely on the idea of possession, conquest, superiority, and revenge, creating a sense of him as the legitimate holder of power, and others as impediments to his goals.

The possessive language used by Barbarossa sets ownership as the first impression. As he's looking at the pearls that the oyster has brought back, he warns his followers that: "You don't want to come back without my pearl." He does not call the magical pearls treasures of Mertropia, or even natural resources, but "my prize". The possessive determiner "My" linguistically steals the ownership from the rightful guardians and gives it to Barbarossa. The noun "prize" on the other hand, situates the pearls as trophies that are designed for his personal ambition instead of being ones that have cultural or communal value.

A second lexical pattern is the constant use of terms related to hunting and trapping by Barbarossa. Talking to Tempesta, he explains, "I'll eat them when I'm ready, but in the meantime, I'll feed them into the trap that I'm going to set". The semantic field of the lexical item "bait" and "trap" is not area of cooperation or diplomacy, but

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hunting. These expressions, which he is choosing to focus on, portray conflict as a kind of predation, where those who are attacked are not equal players but victims.

- **Expressions of Modality, Certainty, and Authoritative Statement**

A further linguistic device that Barbarossa uses is the use of modal expressions and authoritative assertions, which convey certainty, inevitability, and absolute confidence. In Critical Discourse Analysis, modality is the linguistic tools employed in the expression of certainty, obligation, probability, or necessity by the speaker. Within Teun A. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework, modal expressions can be ideologically significant because they shape the perception of authority and legitimacy in audiences. Those who say 'I will' instead of 'I may' make themselves seem more like a strong person whose choices are absolute. A Volcanic Adventure often relies on these modal verbs and assertions to convey that Barbarossa's goals are 'inevitable' and not 'might be'.

Barbarossa's confidence is strengthened when he talks to Tempesta about the magical pearls. He is encouraged by Tempesta who says: "You should suck up the force from these pearls right now, you will be unbeatable". Should" is a modal verb in the sense of advice given by Tempesta, but the phrase "You will be invincible" makes a prediction without any qualifiers. Barbarossa replies, "I'll suck them up when I'm ready for them". With the auxiliary "will," he is once again completely confident in his plans. He often places his goals as being certain, necessary and legitimate and also reduces the likelihood of failure or opposition, using the modal verbs 'will' and 'must'. As a result, modality is not just a grammatical phenomenon, but an ideological tool that makes Barbarossa seem like a stronger authority, gives his ambitions legitimacy, and confirms his identity as the stronger character of A Volcanic Adventure.

- **Presupposition and the Naturalization of Authority**

According to Critical Discourse Analysis, presupposition is the information that is assumed to be true for speakers and does not need to be explained. Whereas presuppositions state a belief as true without you having to convince the listener, they are used to persuade listeners with certain beliefs. Dominant groups often use presuppositions for a number of reasons, the first being that they help to construct the mental models of the audience, and in doing so, they create an illusion of what

is justifiable, natural, and taken for granted as ideology by Teun A. van Dijk. The entire time A Volcanic Adventure, Barbarossa seems to assume his supremacy over the magical pearls and the underwater kingdom, creating domination as if it were a state of things already present, rather than one to be won. An important example comes in when Barbarossa speaks to his followers and says,

"You don't want to come back without my prize, do you? The possessive word my is very suggestive; it implies that the magical pearl is already his.

Barbarossa is also influenced by presuppositions in dealing with other characters. He is defeated and tells “Mr. Redd get 50 barrels of brew before sunrise, otherwise I will kidnap your children and give them to Tempesta”. In this statement, Barbarossa assumes the right to bind and punish others by acting. He provides no justification for Mr. Redd to follow his order, nor does he give justification to his right to threaten innocent family members.

- **Symbolic Lexicalization**

The volcano serves as the physical backdrop of the war, but it also embodies a sense of instability, destruction, and the effects of unchecked ambition. Barbarossa deliberately selects this perilous setting where he thinks he will be able to put his plan into action and weaken his enemies but also strengthen himself. It is also important to note that the word “Vengeance” is used several times by Barbarossa. Merlinda runs away with two pearls and he angrily says, "If she brings my two cursed pearls to her cursed kingdom, maybe my vengeance will be delayed for months”. In this context, vengeance refers to the restoration of impaired authority and not to just one's personal revenge.

❖ **Discursive Representation of Resistance in the Mermaids' Language**

The mermaids develop an alternative discourse based on cooperation, collective responsibility, and moral resistance. While Barbarossa builds his power through domination, fear, and exclusive ownership. In Volcanic Adventure, Merlinda and other mermaids continually challenge the authority of Barbarossa by debunking his beliefs regarding the magic pearls and stressing the need for them to protect Mertropia together. Instead of aggression or ambition, the mermaids use language that fosters unity, bravery, trust, and hope.

The difference is made clear from the first second Merlinda discovers Barbarossa taking the magical pearls. She immediately says, "He has been eating all the pearls from the oyster beds!" She says: "We need to prevent him from obtaining the final one, rather than it being for his personal use." The use of the inclusive pronoun "we" immediately sets up resistance as a collective responsibility, not an individual mission. Their language is not as possessive as Barbarossa's; They don't say "My prize," or "I'll have all the pearls, but "My resources" or "The resources are mine". This contrast creates two opposing points of view, one monopolization and domination, and the other of cooperation and collective welfare.

- **Language of Solidarity and Collective Identity**

Solidarity and collective identity are one of the most important discursive strategies used by mermaids to build resistance in A Volcanic Adventure. Whereas Barbarossa's language always focuses on personal ownership, authority, and individual control, the mermaids have a language of cooperation, unity, and shared responsibility. A socio-cognitive model developed by Teun A. van Dijk is fundamental for the concept of group identity, as he argues that social identity based on discourse is mainly built upon the repetition of language patterns, which influence an audience's perception of social relationships and collective belonging. The mermaids use 'we', 'us', 'our', 'we're', 'we can', etc. repeatedly, offering viewers the opportunity to consider resistance as a joint social endeavor, not an individual one. Their discourse thus creates another conception of power, based on unity rather than domination.

This is a collective orientation that is immediately evident after Merlinda finds out about Barbarossa's plot to steal the magical pearls. She does not act on her own but begs her friends "We must try to stop him from getting the last one." Immediately the inclusive pronoun "we" makes every member of the group responsible for protecting Mertropia, too. Merlinda's use of first-person pronouns like "I and my is minimized, unlike how Barbarossa constantly uses them like I'll have all the pearls". Linguistic choices have been criticized from a Critical Discourse Analysis point of view as undermining the hierarchy of power in leadership by creating a participatory rather than centralized leadership.

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- **Counter-Discourse and Resistance**

The first reference to counter-discourse comes when Merlinda finds out about Barbarossa's plan and exclaims "He's been taking all the pearls from the oyster beds!" She does not take the loss of the pearls as a bad thing, saying instead that Barbarossa's actions were an intentional exploitation. This is an admission that some of what he has been doing is shady and calls into question the right to his control over the pearls. Merlinda makes it clear how oppression is happening, thus changing the story from loss to resistance.

The mermaids' counter-discourse becomes more apparent in the climax of the episode. Barbarossa is physically strong and magically powerful, but he's beginning to erode, as the mermaids don't accept his assumptions in language. They deny him the ownership of the family, challenge and distrust his leadership, and go their own way of doing things on their own moral standards. Teun A. van Dijk believes that dominant ideologies have to be accepted in people's cognitive models to be effective. The mermaids' rejection of Barbarossa's words, however, disrupts this mental exercise and substitutes it with an alternative sense of legitimacy derived from cooperation, justice, and collective responsibility.

- **Moral Framing of Resistance**

The mermaids in A Volcanic Adventure also use a lot of moralizing to talk about their resistance. Moral framing, as per Critical Discourse Analysis, is the process of presenting actions, characters or events in an ethical way, which allows the audience to assess one group as "morally right" while another is "morally wrong". The mermaids never act for personal gain but instead act with the purposes of responsibility, protection, courage, and sacrifice. Their discourse does not seek resistance to authority but rather it is an ethical duty to protect Mertropia and to restore balance to the underwater kingdom. In the socio-cognitive theory of Teun A. van Dijk, this moral discourse has the potential to influence the audience's mental models, prompting them to connect legitimacy in terms of justice with obedience and not domination.

The moral basis of the mermaids' resistance is brought out in Merlinda's statement that "He's been taking all the pearls from the oyster beds!" as soon as she finds out Barbarossa has taken the magic pearls. When she loses some, she doesn't get angry;

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she immediately strives to save the kingdom saying, "We've got to stop him before he gets the last one. This focus is not necessarily on defeating Barbarossa for revenge, but simply to stop him from inflicting more damage to Mertropia. In a CDA context, this frames the 'mermaids' action as moral rather than political.

- **Cooperative Discourse and Collaborative Decision-Making**

Cooperation and collaborative decision making are another strong theme of the mermaids' speech in A Volcanic Adventure. Barbarossa's discourse contains many orders, threats, and unilateral decisions, but not mermaids. Critical Discourse Analysis states that the language represents social structures and resilience. Cooperative practices in communication then provide an alternative approach to power to counter the authoritarian practice of power.

Merlinda's discovery of Barbarossa's plan makes it clear that the mermaids speak cooperatively. She tells him to give her the pearls, saying, "He's been stealing all the pearls from the oyster beds! Then she promptly says, "We must prevent him from getting the last one". While speaking to her companions, Merlinda doesn't give orders; she positions the job as a joint venture: "We've got to..." The burden is thus shared by the entire group rather than by a single leader. It is a linguistic structure that is a manifestation of a communicative attitude of equality, where all the communicants work together for the same goal. This type of discourse is quite different from that of Barbarossa whose discourse always consisted of imperative expressions, demanding obedience without considering.

- **Discursive discourse of Empowerment**

A Volcanic Adventure is an episode that uses counter-discursive practice to create empowerment through language. The mermaids' language builds up self-confidence, determination, and strength to resist oppression while Barbarossa's discourse is meant to weaken, intimidate and control others. In the context of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the concept of empowerment discourse is associated with the language practices that help to create positive identities, build resilience, and contest dominant discourses for the marginalized groups. The socio-cognitive model by Teun A. van Dijk explains that such discourse can affect the audience's mental representations because it makes resistance appear as if it is

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possible and legitimate. The mermaids continually show that power is not based on fear or force, but on courage, determination, and unity.

The mermaids' trust in their team's mission strengthens their sense of empowerment. Merlinda tells her friends that " Mertropia cannot survive without the pearls". This assertion underscores the gravity of the situation but also establishes a clear goal for their actions. The mermaids do not represent weak victims of the domination of Barbarossa, but themselves as protectors whose deeds are needed for the future of their kingdom. This discourse builds an empowered collective identity as it focuses on responsibility, capability, and hope rather than weakness.

- **Power Relations and Socio-Cognitive Representation**

Once the dominant discourse of Barbarossa and counter-discursive practices of the mermaids are studied, it can be clearly seen that the story A Volcanic Adventure is revealing a wider ideological conflict because of interaction between the two discourses. It is not just a tale about a fantasy adventure of getting magical pearls; it shows two ideologically opposite concepts concerning the definition of authority, legitimacy, justice, and social responsibility. According to the sociocognitive model of Teun A. van Dijk, ideologies are reproduced through discourse because the use of language establishes the mental model of reality in the minds of audiences. Hence, contrasting repeated discourses of Barbarossa with authoritarian style of communication with discourse of mermaids based on cooperation and responsibility creates a polarized vision of the participants to the conflict.

Discourse created a polarized vision of the two opposing groups within the whole episode. This opposition that Barbarossa declares, "I'll have all the pearls and Mertropia will have none," and Merlinda counters, "We've got to stop him before he gets the last one." It is clear from the above statements that there are basically two opposing ideologies here. Barbarossa sees pearls as tools through which he can gain his own authority, while the mermaids see pearls as common property required for the protection of their whole kingdom.

In the view of Critical Discourse Analysis, it is fictional world of Mermaid Magic, but is indicative of larger social patterns of power, leadership, and resistance. Barbarossa's talk is like authoritarian systems where unequal access to resources is

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justified through fear, coercion, and centralized authority. In contrast, the discourse of the mermaids is a discourse of democratic values in cooperation, participation and mutual responsibility. Teun A. van Dijk argues that the repeated exposure to such contrasting discourses shapes the socio-cognitive representations of audiences, thus influencing their evaluation of legitimacy, leadership and justice.

Discussion

This study focuses on language as a tool that formulates a structure of dominance and resistance in the Netflix animated episode titled A Volcanic Adventure from Mermaid Magic (2024). From the results, the confrontation between Barbarossa and the mermaids goes beyond mere physical conflict of the two opposing forces and capable of being manifested discourse-wise. The very language used by the two parties contributes to forming different ideological stances, which influence the interpretation of the concepts of authority, resistance, legitimacy, and social relations from the perspective of the viewers. Language is not only a means of communication in this episode; it serves to create and recreate existing power relations.

The initial aim of the research was to investigate that Barbarossa employs different discursive practices to establish and maintain his dominance and authority. The analysis also reveals that Barbarossa's discourse naturalizes and justifies exclusive ownership, thereby normalizing unequal access to resources. He turns communal resources into communal property by continuously referring to the magical pearls as his own property. Such discourse is indicative of ideological presuppositions characteristic of authoritarian systems, in which political power is consolidated through linguistic domination of material resources, social relations, and knowledge.

The second aim was to explore the counter-discursive practices of mermaids as a form of resistance. The results indicate that mermaids consistently employ inclusive pronouns, cooperative expressions, moral reasoning, collaborative decision-making, and empowerment of discourse to resist Barbarossa's authoritarian. Drawing on Van Dijk's socio-cognitive perspective, such counter-discourses call upon audiences to re-construct their mental models by recognizing cooperation and justice as legitimate bases of authority.

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The results support previous arguments from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective that children's animated narratives are significant sites of ideological production. While Mermaid Magic was intended as an example of family-oriented entertainment, its discourse communicates key elements of societal notions of leadership, justice, environmental responsibility, cooperation, and oppositional forces aimed at countering forms of oppression.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the findings discussed here illustrate that the narrative of Mermaids and Barbarossa depicts language as a primary means of defining the relationship between domination and resistance. This study explored the dynamics of power and play as it relates to the use of language through the lens of a theoretical framework.

❖ **Major Findings of the Study**

The findings are discussed according to the theoretical framework utilized for the study, sociocognitive models as proposed by Teun A. van Dijk within the theoretical approach of Critical Discourse Analysis. The primary objective of this study was to provide a synthesis of the analytical findings regarding the linguistic structure, ideological representation, and narrative framing in the two narratives of Mermaids and Barbarossa.

- **Discursive Construction of Power and Dominance**

The research showed that Barbarossa dominates through language: the analysis revealed that power is mainly created in the story through the use of language rather than through physical actions. The socio-cognitive theory of Teun A. van Dijk provides evidence that dominant groups use language in a manner that represents their authority as justifiable and unquestionable.

- **Dissonance in Discursive Strategy**

Second finding of the research has revealed that mermaids articulate their resistance through a series of counter-discursive strategies. In contrast to Barbarossa's authoritative language, the mermaids use a language based on collaboration, solidarity, and group identity. The mermaids present themselves as acting morally

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and as part of a group whose actions are justified by moral principles, creating a different ideological narrative to Barbarossa's narrative of domination.

- **Narrative Framing and Moral Legitimacy**

The study has revealed another finding that deals with how narratives frame ideological interpretations. Instead, discourse presented at a higher level than only single sentences. It presents it at a more general level, which encompasses the narrative structure's overall effect on how audiences interpret discourse on an ideological level.

- **Language as an Influence on Social Cognition**

The findings of the study further suggest that discourse contributes to the construction of social cognition by influencing individuals define and perceive power relationships and ethical values. Conversely, the way mermaids interact with one another creates a discourse of cooperation and supports interpretations of solidarity, justice and collective responsibility.

- **Fictional Narratives as Ideological Texts**

A final major finding of the study is that fictional narratives should not only be seen as entertainment; rather, they have been found to contain profound and complex discursive structures telling larger social ideologies and cultural values are expressed. In the context of Critical Discourse Analysis, these types of narratives are viewed as cultural products that contribute to the creation and reproduction of social meanings. The results of this research demonstrate the need for analyzing fictional or animated texts as key sites for ideological discourse.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the connection between language, resilience, and power in the story of Mermaids and Barbarossa using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with specific attention to the socio-cognitive model developed by Teun A. van Dijk. The study provides strong evidence that the Mermaids and Barbarossa narrative is fundamentally structured on ideological oppositions, most of which are realized through language. This study also

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highlighted the ideological polarization, which is a major factor to influence how narratives are constructed and utilized.

Another important point is that the discourse of fiction and animated narratives contains ideologies that are reflected in their themes and character actions; the analysis of the two Warner Bros. produced stories, Mermaids and Barbarossa, indicates that both the individual stories and the genre of fantasy entertainment have ideological consequences with respect to authority, collective resistance to authority, fairness, rights or fairness and authority are defined collectively.

Recommendations

The recommendations provided here are predicated on the analytical findings resulting from the application of a Critical Discourse Analysis approach using the socio-cognitive approach of Teun A. van Dijk as an analytical tool. Lastly, these recommendations have been provided to encourage expansion of the current body of research on language, resilience and power in narrative discourse by providing avenues of continued scholarly research in this area.

Future researchers are encouraged to continue broadening the application for Critical Discourse Analysis outside of its traditional arenas such as political speeches, media discourse and institutional communication. The current study indicates that narrative texts such as fiction and animated narratives are both strong sites for ideological creation.

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