

A Discourse Analysis of A News Report on Child Abuse

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Abstract

Although we differentiate and name anything we give an eye to, what the science we study and try to understand and be part of it is the rest of one's self. Primary concern of this study is to examine how differently the same even has been reported in two different newspapers. The news has been entitled with "Nothing less than kid brides" in Milliyet Newspaper and "Organized a first sexual experience for his 14 year-old-son and Got engaged in a lawsuit" in Cumhuriyet Newspaper, which is about a father who arranges a meeting for his son to have sex for the first time. The event has been reported in different ways choosing different words in Milliyet and Cumhuriyet Newspapers. In order to understand what is going on around us and why it is as it is, we should deconstruct what is already constructed in the society, so in this paper in the frame of discourse analysis of a child abuse news, a few aspects of human beings will be discussed in order to prove what matters actually is humanity. Although it is human beings what matters, for the sake of social systems, beliefs and old traditions, they happen to be overlooked. Accordingly, Teun A. van Dijk's discourse analysis and related social and psychological interpretations will be used to have a good grasp of ourselves in our small world. After brief background information about discourse analysis and the models used accordingly, the news about a father who forces his son to have sex with a woman, and its possible consequences will be discussed.

Key Words: Discourse Analysis, Semiotics, Gender, Temporary Bride

Introduction

This study is concerned with the presentation of the event in the press when a father organizes a sexual experience for his 14 year old boy in order to make him ready for adulthood stage, which is generally regarded as a necessary ritual to prove of manhood and such social norms are reproduced through media in modern societies. When analyzed the same news in two different newspapers Milliyet Newspaper and Cumhuriyet Newspaper, it is found out that all the news present a certain perspective to the reader and gender norms are reproduced.

It is clear that what the father of a 14 year old boy has done is accepted as newsworthy but it is important to know from what perspective the event has been entreated in order to determine the social attitude towards such manhood rituals having sex with women because it is known that there has been so many such examples in history of Turkey. One of them is a film "EgretiGelin" based on the novel of Sukran Kozali *EgretiGelinler* and it has made a tremendous impact on both Turkish people and the critics. This film

“*EgretiGelin*” has issued a common tradition in the region of Denizli city in the example of the true story of Sukran Kozalı’s uncle. Although the idea of the film has been opposed by some people like Chair of Educational and Cultural Foundation of Denizli, ZiyaTikiroglu on the ground that hiring a women for a family’s son to have sexual experience before marriage is not that common phenomenon to be counted as a tradition, “*EgretiGelin*” has been about true stories happened around 1930s when some families accommodate a woman regarded as a temporary bride but not like a prostitute to teach their son sexuality before getting married on the condition that these women are not to fall in love with the boy or get pregnant, and they have to leave home when asked (Radikal, 2005). Therefore, it is so evident that for a Turkish family it has been so important to see their son prove manhood that the family, even father himself can arrange the first sexual experience. While some criticize the film, “*EgretiGelin*” and never agree on having such a shameful tradition in Turkey, some people acknowledge this fact and make it known by writing a book like SukranKozalı’s *EgretiGelinler*, or directing a film like “*EgretiGelin*” by AtifYilmaz.

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In spite of the fact that people are exposed to the same historical and cultural background, their inferences from the past and attitudes against some practices may change drastically. It can be inferred that meaning is produced depending on setting, participants, social roles and many more aspects rather than being attached to the symbols throughout the history. The manners and the meanings can be read easily focusing on the choice of words, structure, the titles of the text, foreword, opening statements or the first paragraph of the text, the context, main event, background (Solak, 2011, p.4).

For the news dated 4th November 2015 the headline on Milliyet Newspaper and Cumhuriyet Newspaper are as follows:

1. “Çocukgelindenhiçbirkıyok” , translated in English “Nothing less than kid brides”(Milliyet, 4th November 2015)
2. 14 yaşındakioğluna ‘İlk cinseldeneyim’ organize etti, davalıkoldu, translated in English “Organized a first sexual experience for his 14 year-old-son and Got engaged in a lawsuit”(Cumhuriyet,4th November 2015)

The headlines of the news dated 4th November 2015 already reflect the content of the event, and obviously the theme is hiring a prostitute for an underage boy by a father himself.

We have seen “information filtering” on the both headlines since the both headlines do not mention the fact that the person who has had sexual experience is a kind of psychological violence against him or her (Doruk, 2013, p.116). On the contrary, the one “Organized a first sexual experience for his 14 year-old-son and Got engaged in a lawsuit” implies that the father did something normal like organizing a birthday party and unexpectedly ended up with a lawsuit, which is as if surprising. This headline informs us that what happens is a crime according to Turkish criminal law but there is no hint for blaming the father for his unethical and inconvenient deed. In the second headline, the news of Cumhuriyet Newspaper, we see editing in the phrase “organized a first...”but it is not mentioned who “organized” and where it was “organized”, however when specific details of the event like who, where and when has done, the sense of general, normal and ordinary is imposed, therefore the impact of the event is reduced (Cumhuriyet,4th November 2015). Reducing the impact of such an abusive and unethical event is a taking side, which serves to patriarchal society’s gender norms to be reproduced. On the other hand, the first headline in the Milliyet Newspaper is allusive and in saying “Nothing less than kid brides”(Milliyet, 4th November 2015) it refers to the previous shameful news about little girls who are forced to get married under the cover of tradition, which is clearly sexual violence against them.

The introduction paragraphs and the photographs of the news are as important as the headlines of the newspapers because they create the first impression on the readers and canalize their thoughts. The voice of the writers gets clearer in the first paragraph of the news.

Prof. Dr. Corapcioglu, 'Bir çocuğu cinsel ilişkiye zorlamış oluyorsun. Bunun çocuk gelinlerden hiçbir farkı yok' darken Yrd. Doç. Dr. Zahmacioğlu ise 'Bu, istismar ve ihmâl riski taşıyan çok açık bir cahilliktir' diye konuştu. (Milliyet, 4th November 2015)

Translated in English as follows:

While Prof. Dr. Corapcioglu has stated that "you make a child have sex by force. This is nothing less than child bride" Assist. Prof. Dr. Zahmacioğlu has expressed that "this is a clearly ignorance having the risk of abuse and negligence" (Milliyet, 4th November 2015)

14 yaşındaki oğlu ilk ilişkisini yaşasın diyebir kadınla anlaşılan babaya "çocuğun cinsel istismarı" ve "fuhuşa yer temin etmek" gibi suçlardan 12 yıla kadar hapis cezası istemiyle dava açıldı. Sosyal medya kullanıcıları 14 yaşındaki oğluna "ilk cinsel deneyim" hazırlayan baba hakkında yaptıkları paylaşım ile tepkilerini ortaya koydu. (Cumhuriyet, 4th November 2015)

Translated in English as follows:

The father arranging a woman for his 14 year-old son to have first sexual experience has been charged with "child sexual abuse" and "accommodate for prostitution" and asked for 12 years imprisonment. Social media users have reacted against the father who has organized a first sexual experience for his 14 year-old son. (Cumhuriyet, 4th November 2015)

In Milliyet Newspaper we see that the focus is on 14 year-old child and the adverse effects of the event. The journalist has given place for two different experts' opinion on consequence of the father's deed. The journalist of the Milliyet Newspaper concerns about what happens to the child as a result of this abusive act and has consulted two different specialists, which shows how seriously they approach to the event. The words such as "abuse" "negligence" and "ignorance" used in the first paragraph of the news in the Milliyet Newspaper are the real reactions of the experts and we know who has reacted, which is notable and serious reaction. Since these reactions are the words of experts they carry scientific realism and as Assist. Prof. Dr. Zahmacioğlu emphasize in saying "ignorance", this event has social grounds as we have seen in the film "EgretiGelin".

When it comes to Cumhuriyet Newspaper, we see that the focus is on the father and what the father has faced up with as a result of his act. The news has been reported in a distance and there is no clear condemn or the accusing expression against the father. From the news reported the readers are informed that the father has been charged with certain crimes and some social media users have reacted but it is not evident if it is rightful or not. The identities of the people who have reacted against and for what reason they have reacted are unknown. The real event to be condemned is overlooked and ignored and the attention has been paid to unessential part of this unethical and shameful event. It is not clear in the news reported in Cumhuriyet Newspaper whether social media users have reacted against 12 year imprisonment of the father because some people still believe in proving manhood by having sex with women is normal as we have been informed by the film "EgretiGelin" by Atif Yılmaz and the news reported in Radikal and Milliyet Newspapers on the tradition of temporary bride around Denizli city. While the following titles of the news reported in Cumhuriyet Newspaper are as "How the father has got caught?" and "what does the lawyers say?", "Is there any chance the boy has been traumatized?" and "Is there similar examples in the world?" in the Milliyet Newspaper we observe that the titles are child-oriented such as "the boys lose the interest" and "Clearly ignorance".

Conclusion

In this study a child abuse news in two different newspaper has been analyzed by discourse analysis. Since we do not use language just to exchange information but we “do things” with language or we can “be things” through language, in this paper it has been examined the discourse of the news reported in two different newspapers, Milliyet Newspaper and Cumhuriyet Newspaper (Gee, 2011, p. 2). It has been disclosed how Milliyet Newspaper has strongly protested child abuse and takes sides with sanity and socially, psychologically wellness of the children while Cumhuriyet Newspaper have discussed how the criminal has been caught as if the unexpected event is his being charged with a crime and a fathers’ procuring women for their sons are quite common and normal. When analyzed semantic, syntactic, and rhetoric structure of the news reported it is seen how differently they have handled the subject.

Although the victim who has been socially, psychologically and sexually wronged is the 14 year-old boy, in Cumhuriyet Newspaper has focused on what has happened to the father. In addition to this, in Cumhuriyet it is stated that “according to the forensic report, mental health of B.K has not been deteriorated” and it has been followed by an expert’s explanation: “In Turkey the fathers procuring women for their sons are seen. And they may tell what they have done boastfully in coffeehouses or somewhere else”(Cumhuriyet,4th November 2015). As you may notice the expert use passive voice and gives the impression of generalization and normalization. The expert continues; “what is applied to the child is not only teaching the practice of sexuality”, so we see that the expert has testified that there is a good side of procuring women for underage boys by their fathers (Cumhuriyet,4th November 2015). The expert has mentioned possible gender issues indirectly but she also has added that there is no direct harm of it; “it also affects the boys’ understanding of the relationship between men and women, the meaning of the sexuality. Children are not directly traumatized”(Cumhuriyet,4th November 2015). Giving place to the other similar examples in the world and in Turkey as seen in the film “EgretiGelin”, Cumhuriyet Newspaper has strengthened the sense of generalization and normalization, however in Milliyet Newspaper, the experts has been used to show and stress the insanitation of the event and unhealthy consequences for the individual and the society.

In creation of meaning, “what meaning is imposed or coded by whom in what “construction units” are studied in detail to detect the intended meaning on the spot correlated with social, political, cultural, psychological dimensions (Galasinski, 2001, p.63). it is seen that semantic, syntactic and rhetoric analysis as well as word choice and referential meaning are important. The same event can be reported in different syntactic and semantic structure and quite different meanings and effect can be created. Through such discourses social norms are reproduced and the society gets shaped.

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