



Analysis of Saadi's Political Thought in the Interaction and Confrontation of Discourse Systems (Case Study of Four Odes of Praise)

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Abstract

Imagology is a branch of comparative literature that examines the image of the "I" and the "other" in a literary work. The development of relationships, travel and communication caused the Iranian "me" to be more exposed to the culture, customs and opinions of the European "other" and to correct old mental assumptions or to start creating new mental stereotypes. Today we are left with many travelogues from the Qajar era that can be cited as valid evidence to examine the image of "the other". Ezz al-Doulah's Travelogue in Europe is one of the first anecdotes from the point of view of an Iranian prince. The purpose of this research is to examine the images described in Ezz al-Doulah's Travelogue in Europe and to clarify how the image of "the other" is reflected in the work and at the same time, show how the Iranian "me" presents itself during the observations. To this end, we will use the descriptive-analytical method in data analysis, and we will specifically use Ditzel's view of imagology. This research shows that the

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representation of images from the traveler's point of view emphasizes "the superiority of the identity of the other" from different dimensions and to "ignore one's own identity".

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1. Introduction

This study examines Saadi's political thought through the analysis of four selected qasidas (odes), exploring the discourses present in his works and their interactions. Despite extensive research in Persian literature, there remains a need to analyze influential literary figures like Saadi, whose writings have shaped Iranian culture and language. This research employs discourse analysis, a method that utilizes linguistic tools and semantic processes to uncover hidden structures and dominant ideologies within texts.

The selection of qasidas is based on their historical grounding and specificity, as they address real political figures of Saadi's time. These texts reflect the socio-political conditions of his era and reveal his perspectives on governance and legitimacy. By analyzing how Saadi legitimizes or delegitimizes individuals and ideas, the study identifies his intellectual framework and its alignment or divergence from the dominant discourses of his time.

Research Question(s)

The study ultimately addresses two main questions:

- (1) Which discourses are present in Saadi's political thought?
- (2) How do these discourses interact and confront each other?

2. Literature Review

2.1

In the article "A Re-reading of the First Chapter of Saadi's Bustan with an Approach to Legitimization in the Discourse of Governance," published in the scientific-research journal *Textual Studies in Literature* by the same author (2020), the first chapter of Bustan, which is directly related to governance, has been examined in terms of methods of legitimization within this discourse. However, this article solely employs van Leeuwen's approach and does not address ideological othering in the text.

2.2

"Others in the Mirror of Saadi's Golestan and Bustan," a Master's thesis by Hadi Yazdani (2009) from the University of Ilam, identifies the most significant perspectives on "self" and "other" in Golestan and Bustan as being shaped by social class, race and language, religion, and gender. Through this lens, the author argues, one can gain insight into Saadi himself and the people of his time. While this research focuses on Golestan and Bustan, our study centers on analyzing Saadi's qasidas (odes) addressed to his own and non-own patrons. Additionally, the tools of self-legitimization and delegitimization of others, alongside the discourses that define the self or the other, are among the key issues explored in this research.

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In a thesis titled "An Analysis of the Fourth and Eighth Chapters of Saadi's Golestan Based on van Leeuwen's Framework: Representation of Social Actions in Discourse" (Shiraz University, Afrouz Rafiei, 2012), the author first examines the prominent discursive features in the fourth and eighth chapters of Saadi's Golestan and then explains the distinctions between these discourses based on van Leeuwen's framework. The difference between this research and the present article lies, on the one hand, in the texts analyzed and, on the other hand, in the chosen approach

3 Methodology

This research employs a discourse analysis approach, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Teun van Leeuwen and Teun A. van Dijk, to examine Saadi's qasidas (odes) and uncover the political discourses embedded within them. The study focuses on identifying the persuasive strategies Saadi uses to legitimize the "self" and delegitimize the "other," as well as analyzing the ideological dynamics at play.

Van Leeuwen's Framework

Van Leeuwen (2008) defines discourse as knowledge constructed by social forces within a specific social context, enabling the production and interpretation of particular social actions. His framework emphasizes the relationship between language and society, focusing on sociolinguistic and semantic components embedded in linguistic features. These elements reveal how authors represent social activities through textual language.

Van Leeuwen identifies four key strategies for legitimization or delegitimization within discourse:

Authorization: Legitimacy is granted through reference to established traditions, laws, institutions, or authoritative figures, such as religious texts or socially recognized expertise.

Moral Evaluation: Texts seek to legitimize claims by aligning them with moral values, often through indirect references to ethical systems via adjectives, analogies, or abstractions.

Rationalization: This strategy involves justifying actions or ideas by linking them to institutionalized goals or societal norms. It employs explanations, definitions, or predictions to present the discourse as logical and purposeful.

Mythification: This process involves creating or recounting stories or myths that reward legitimate actions and punish illegitimate ones, embedding ideological messages within narrative structures.

These strategies can operate independently or in combination, either legitimizing certain discourses or critiquing and undermining others. They are typically embedded in descriptive and prescriptive statements, often occupying the most prominent positions in a text (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 94).

Van Dijk's Social-Cognitive Approach

Van Dijk's theory integrates discourse, cognition, and society into a triangular framework, emphasizing the role of cognition in communication and social interaction. He defines discourse as a communicative event with three main dimensions:

Language Use: The linguistic structure and function of the text.

Belief Systems: The cognitive aspect, where discourse reflects and shapes shared beliefs and ideologies.

Social Interaction: The situational context in which discourse occurs, highlighting its role in constructing and negotiating social relationships.

Van Dijk also introduces the concept of the ideological square, which outlines four strategies used in ideological discourse:

Emphasizing the positive aspects of the "self."

Highlighting the negative aspects of the "other."

Ignoring the positive qualities of the "other."

Concealing the negative traits of the "self."

These strategies revolve around two axes: positive self-presentation and negative other-representation. They manifest through textual markers that reflect these ideological biases (Van Dijk, 1995: 143). This model allows for a nuanced understanding of how power dynamics and ideological undercurrents shape discourse.

Application to Saadi's Works

This study applies van Leeuwen's framework to identify the persuasive tools Saadi employs in legitimizing or delegitimizing individuals and groups. Simultaneously, van Dijk's ideological square is used to analyze the content Saadi seeks to highlight or marginalize. By examining these discursive strategies, the research moves from macro-level discourse analysis to micro-level textual exploration, uncovering hidden meanings and ideological layers within Saadi's qasidas.

The integration of these frameworks enables a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between language, ideology, and social context in Saadi's works, shedding light on his political thought and the historical conditions of his time.

4. Results

In his qasidas addressed to the Atabegs of Fars and his own ministers, such as Ata Malek Joveyni, Saadi extensively employs ****moral evaluation**** and ****rationalization**** to legitimize their rule. These rulers are depicted as morally and rationally legitimate through repeated use of attributes such as just, trustworthy, and virtuous. By emphasizing rationalization, Saadi portrays their governance as a means to achieve social objectives like maintaining order and justice, justifying their legitimacy by highlighting the positive societal impacts of their actions.

In contrast, in qasidas addressed to the Mongols, particularly Ankanu, Saadi focuses on delegitimizing their authority by critiquing their unstable power and harsh, oppressive policies. He uses allegories and analogies to underscore the transient nature of worldly power and the fragility of the Mongol ruling system, characterizing their reliance on force and swords as their sole source of authority. This reflects Saadi's effort to delegitimize foreign rule while advocating for reform among rulers to improve societal conditions.

When addressing ideal rulers, Saadi integrates both "religious" and "rationalist discourses" to justify and consolidate their power. In an era dominated by Ash'arite ideology and fatalistic thought in Shiraz, Saadi balances the divine concept of kings as "God's shadow" with an emphasis on rational governance and social responsibility. Through rational arguments, he highlights enduring principles such as justice and care for the populace, thereby legitimizing the political systems of his ideal rulers.

In qasidas directed at the Mongols, Saadi employs rational arguments to explain the anticipated consequences of their unjust and

coercive policies. He warns these rulers of the natural outcomes of injustice and oppression, urging them toward justice-oriented governance by predicting the destructive results of their harsh policies. This demonstrates Saadi's dual approach: delegitimizing foreign rule while attempting to guide rulers toward equitable governance.

Through these strategies, Saadi skillfully navigates the interplay between legitimization and delegitimization, using moral, rational, and religious frameworks to shape his political discourse and influence societal perceptions of power and governance.

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