

A) Synopsis of the Monograph

The Study of Lexical Field of ‘Foroudastan’ (the Subalterns) in the Socio-Political Sphere of Contemporary Iran

Objective: The study aims to show how “the Subaltern” is born as a concept in the sociopolitical space of contemporary Iran and what were the backgrounds and contexts of this phenomenon. On the other hand, various manifestations of this concept in the form of different words and in the form of a lexical field are studied to determine what changes have taken place in the field and concepts in the contemporary history of Iran in a period of one hundred and fifty years, and what has been the stimulus of these shifts and changes and continuities and discontinuities.

Research Methodology: Considering the transdisciplinary nature of the subject under study, and the fact that no such research has been conducted in Persian so far, a theoretical model combining three approaches of Reinhart Koselleck's History of Concepts and Jost Trier's Lexical Field and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis were applied together related to the subject of the study. Fairclough's approach is the mainstay of the proposed model, but since his method is a synchronic method of discourse analysis, and here we are more focused diachronically on concept and words, i.e. on "representation", than on discourse, Koselleck's views have been the guide of analysis in the discussion of the concepts and counter-concepts, and the field and time layers. In the section of document selection and data collection, four simultaneous points were considered; first, the hypotheses we had at the beginning; second, the texts of experts in the fields of history, sociology, and economics; third, Koselleck's recommendation to select first-hand documents such as newspapers and mottos and the code of conducts of political parties and groups, and finally the linguistic intuition that can be helpful in any linguistic research.

Findings: The findings of the study indicate that before the Persian Constitutional Revolution, such a field did not exist in the sociopolitical space of contemporary Iran and we were faced with a simple sultan/ra'yat (king/serf) confrontation, but since the early nineteenth century we have confronted three fields in different time layers. First, on the eve of the Persian Constitutional Revolution and with the arrival of socialist discourse in Iran, the lexical field of subalterns appears, and among them, "ranjbar" (toiler, laborer) and "zahmatkesh" (toiler, laborer) become the main concepts of socialism discourse and have been characteristic of militant discourses for decades. After that, and from the late 1950s, we witness the emergence of Islamist discourse and the concept of "mostaz'af" (one who is kept weak), which represented the subalterns until the Revolution of 1979 and shortly thereafter, and its discursive tensions with the previous two concepts are crystal clear. Finally, we are faced with the recent terms “gheshr-e-asibpazir” (vulnerable class), “dahak-e-paeen” (low-decile class) and “kamtar-barkhordar” (less privileged class),

which bear no resemblance to the concepts of last decades and belong to a completely different regulatory world and knowledge system.

Conclusion: To sum up, we can say that the representation of the subalterns in the contemporary Iran has just been possible in two kinds of world; First, in an epic-revolutionary world with a "subject-making" perspective, in which the subalterns are interpellated as "ranjbar", "zahmatkesh" and "mostaz'af" to become militant subjects who need leadership; Second, in a regulatory world with a "pathological" perspective in which the subalterns are represented as "gheshr-e-asibpazir", "dahak-e-paeen" and "kamtar-barkhordar", and in this world they are not militant subjects and are no longer interpellated and do not need leadership; Rather, in line with the development plans and programs of the new order, they should only be managed.

B) Research Interests

Background: As a student of English Translation for a bachelor degree, I learned to be sensitive to the selection of words and concepts in every text and context. In the process of translating a text, thinking about the authors' intentions to choose a word and finding the best equivalent for it prepared me to take a critical position about texts in general. While getting my master degree in general linguistics, this sensitivity got directed to rhetoric and literature, and I wrote a thesis about metaphors in Forough Farrokhzad's poems according to the cognitive approach. But during my Ph.D. education a meaningful change happened and the traces of "power" and "ideology" in texts got more importance than formal aspects of the language. This paved a way to study critical discourse analysis approaches that required an extended knowledge of society and history.

Works in Progress: In collaboration with Dr. Mohammad Ali Akbari, my advisor, I am working on the idea of "democracy" in Iran. Reviewing a hundred and fifty years of struggle for "democracy", many questions can now be asked about our failures and about the alternatives and possible histories.

Moreover, I am working more on the concept "mostaz'af", as one of the most important key concepts in contemporary Iran. Tracing this concept from its beginning to its rise and fall reveals many conflicts of the groups inside and outside the dominant power, and shows the status quo in a more understandable way.

Beside these projects, I am translating a collection of Reinhart Koselleck's prominent articles so that Persian scholars know him better and get familiar with his approach in studying political concepts.

Future Research: In the years to come, I plan to pursue my research in the same transdisciplinary manner. Therefore, one of the approaches I would like to work with is the history of concepts in which linguistics, history, sociology, and political philosophy come together to give a better explanation of our Iranian world. There are many key concepts such as "citizen", "freedom", "law", "legitimacy" and so on that are very interesting to be explored.