Unveiling Gender Constructs: A Social Identity Analysis of *Barbie* Media Representations

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Abstract

Introduced as a pioneer by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, social identity theory has been expanded with the continuous development of socio-linguistics and media. However, the use of different cultural media to analyze social identity construction has not been fully explored for the time being. This study selected the 2023 release of the film Barbie as the primary subject of investigation and employed a multi-modal research approach to analyze it. The results found that 1) female character terminology exhibits specific gender norms; 2) body language and visuals represent the social identities of female characters; 3) dialog between characters illustrates power dynamics and social trends rooted in identity theory. These findings provide meaningful insights into the use and embodiment of social identity theory from a socio-linguistic perspective.

Keywords: Social identity, Barbie film, multi-modal discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Social identity theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, posits that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). The theory aims to uncover the cognitive workings and societal contexts influencing interactions between different groups, particularly regarding prejudice, bias, and discrimination. With the rise and development of communication studies, interactive sociolinguistics, conversational analysis, and pragmatics, people's understanding of social identity has undergone great changes. The new views mainly include: 1)Language fulfills the role of shaping social identity and aspirations, and the environment in which a group operates exerts a significant influence on their language use, conduct, and mindset; 2)There exists a dynamic interplay between personal and social identity processes; 3)With communication, the overarching aim is consistently the articulation and expression of identity (Tanimu & Nwaobasi, 2024; Elisabetta et al., 2023; Vendler, 2019).

These theories have laid a solid foundation for the development of social identity construction and promoted the continuous improvement of the theory. However, there are still some gaps in the research of social identity theory: 1) The research of social identity construction rarely involves the analysis of multi-modality, such as combining images, sounds, words, and other expressions to explore the expression and cognition of social identity. 2) There are not many existing studies that combine multiple media and cultural forms to conduct cross-modal analysis to explore the cross-level expression and influence of social identity. For example, it combines different forms of cultural content such as film, music, social media, and visual arts, to study the cross-cultural and cross-cutting characteristics of social identity.

This is probably because traditionally, research on social identity construction has been focused on disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and cultural studies. Comprehensive research across different disciplinary boundaries, especially combining media and cultural studies, requires interdisciplinary collaboration and methodological innovation. Multimodal analysis and multimedia research require the application of different methods and tools to collect and analyze data, which may involve interdisciplinary methodological challenges. Therefore, this study will adopt multi-modal methods to analyze the application of the social identity theory in the movie Barbie and conduct semantic analysis and symbol analysis research on the movie, which may help reveal the shaping and reflection of the social identity of the movie as a cultural product. This study examines the fantasy film Barbie, directed by Greta Gerwig and released on July 21, 2023, in the United States and China, based on the promotional video. Given its exploration of women's growth, self-identity, and social identity, this film provides rich material for multimodal research, offering insights into the diverse and complex expressions of identity.

This paper will commence by reviewing and synthesizing existing research on social identity theory, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of its key concepts and findings. Subsequently, it will expound upon the application of multi-modal research methodology within the scope of this study, elucidating its significance and approach. Following this, the paper will undertake a detailed examination of how the dialogue and visual imagery in Barbie manifest social identity theory, employing multi-modal analysis to dissect their nuances and implications. Ultimately, based on the findings of this study, the paper draws pertinent conclusions, offering insights into the intricate interplay between cinematic representation and the constructs of social identity from a sociolinguistics perspective.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Identity

With the in-depth study of social psychology, social identity theory has gradually emerged as a key perspective for understanding group behavior, individual identity and intergroup relations.

The first formal proposal of social identity theory (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979) believed that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, which aims to elucidate the cognitive mechanisms and societal factors that underlie behaviors between different groups, particularly those behaviors that involve prejudice, bias, and discrimination. The groups that individuals are affiliated with, such as social class, family, or a football team, were highlighted as significant sources of pride and self-esteem, and groups offer a framework for individuals to comprehend their identity within a broader community, shaping self-definition through shared characteristics, values, and aspirations according to their proposal (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979).

Social categorization affects intergroup communication, behavior, relations, and socialization (Wilson & Leaper, 2022). According to Hogg, Abrams, Otten, and Hinkle (2004) individuals viewed themselves as members of a particular social group through self-categorization and reinforce this categorization through social identity; At the same time, when individuals identify with a social group, they also accept the values and norms of that group and are to some extent and more susceptible to the influence of that group. Delving into how individuals from overlapping social categories are viewed holds paramount importance in grasping how they are dealt with in their daily existence (Dragojevic et al., 2021). The furtherance of group objectives, even at the cost of personal interests, underscores the power of social identification as a robust resource of social capital, having the potential to yield favorable organizational outcomes(Haslam et al., 2020).

Social comparison makes the significance of the process of social categorization more obvious, so as to make the principle of positive differentiation work, and positive differentiation fulfills the individual's need to gain positive self-esteem(Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). At the same time, however, recent research has pointed out its negative effects: This may lead to a drop in self-esteem as individuals may internalize the negative perspectives about themselves, casting doubts on their abilities and inherent value (Samra, Warburton, & Collins, 2022).

As the context becomes more significant, social identity gains relevance in elucidating a person's experiences and fostering a deeper sense of shared destiny with their group members (Kellezi et al., 2019). Research indicated that individuals' behaviors are prone to variations as the contextual significance of these identities fluctuates (Ramarajan, 2014).

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) highlighted the role of language as a key medium in this process: language is a powerful means for individuals to express and negotiate their social identities; Through people's language choices, usage, and style, they demonstrate their unique social identities to others, while simultaneously interpreting and understanding the social identities of those they encounter. Other research studies involving the pairing of facial images with specific languages, for instance, revealed that participants exhibited a tendency to categorize the faces according to the language they were displayed alongside, also implying that language serves as a significant social cue.(Baus et al., 2021). Remarkably, it appears that in certain instances, there exists an advantage for members of the same group, as faces that are displayed alongside an individual's primary language tend to be recognized with greater accuracy (Champoux-Larsson et al., 2022).

All of the literature above challenge traditional static views of identity by emphasizing its dynamic and interactive nature(Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Ramarajan, 2014). They all recognize the importance of language and social factors in identity formation, negotiation, and expression. Yet there are some problems with the current study. Although scholars have emphasized the key role of language in social identity construction, they

may not have sufficiently explored the role of non-verbal modalities (e.g., body language, facial expressions, dress, etc.) in identity expression. These nonverbal modalities also play an important role in identity construction and communication. Therefore, this dissertation will introduce a multi-modal research approach to delve into how nonverbal modalities, together with language, construct and express social identities. It will analyze how people in different cultures use multi-modality to convey their identities, statuses, roles, and values, in order to fill the gaps in the existing literature on the role of nonverbal modality in the expression of identities and to provide new perspectives and insights for understanding the construction of social identities under sociolinguistics.

2.2 Multi-modality

As science and technology, particularly digital advancements, progress, the method of human communication facilitated solely by a single language medium, is progressively supplanted by a more intricate mode of communication incorporating language, imagery, sound, and other elements. Hence, understanding social behavior and its significance should encompass all conceptual resources, including nonverbal symbols (Jewitt, 2012).

Multi-modal discourse analysis refers to the analysis of texts that contain two or more semiotic resources, or 'modes' of communication. These resources encompass non-verbal cues like intonation, volume, typography, and dimensions, alongside gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Additionally, they encompass various forms of artistic representation such as painting, music, film, and photography (Feng, Zhang, & O'Halloran, 2014).

According to Jewitt, Bezemer, and O'Halloran (2016), the term multimodality is strongly linked to three perspectives on representation and communication. These are social semiotics/systemic functional grammar (SFG) (Leeuwen, 2004); discourse analysis (Baldry & Thibault, 2006); and interactional analysis (Norris, 2004). Scholars have been exploring how individuals construct meaning across various forms of communication, including music, photography, and film. For instance, researchers have delved into meaning-making processes within these diverse modes of communication, as demonstrated by studies conducted by Simonetta, Ntalampiras, and Avanzini (2019) on music and Tseng, Laubrock, and Bateman (2021) on film.

The theoretical roots of systemic-functional multimodal discourse analysis are in systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and social semiotics (Halliday, 1978; Leeuwen, 2004).

Systemic-functional semiotics initially laid down a theoretical foundation for examining linguistic signs. Halliday (1978) proposed that this theory considers language as a social indicator, analyzing it within socio-cultural settings to understand culture as an information system. The contextual elements are essential in analyzing multi-modal communication. In systemic-functional semiotics, context refers to the semiotic or symbolic backdrop of communication; Language intricately interacts with social context, symbolically representing the social system while being shaped by it (Halliday, 1978). The inherent versatility of symbols, capable of generating conceptual, interpersonal, and collective meanings concurrently during their utilization, can be expanded to encompass contextual considerations, aligning with the field, tenor, and mode of discourse within a given context (Halliday 1978; Halliday & Hasan 1987). This interconnectedness between the multifunctionality of the symbolic content layer and contextual elements forms a theoretical foundation for interpreting the significance of symbol choices within social contexts.

Matthiessen (2007) was aware of the differences between multimodal and linguistic contexts and emphasized the major changes in the way discourse is conducted at the contextual level. Machin and Ledin (2020) explored different approaches and perspectives of multi-modal discourse analysis. O'Halloran & Smith (2012) focused on issues in multimodal research and domains in multimodal research.

Their work provides an important starting point for an in-depth exploration of the description of symbolic systems in multimodal settings (Matthiessen, 2007; Machin & Ledin, 2020; O'Halloran & Smith,2012). The present research paradigm helps us to understand more fully how symbol systems operate in multi-modal contexts and how they affect the context. However, there are still some issues that need to be further explored and resolved in multi-modal discourse analysis. The definition of the concept of context in multi-modal settings may need more refinement and flexibility. Traditionally, context is mainly related to language, but in multi-modal discourse, context is not only limited to the linguistic environment, but also involves a variety of elements such as images and sounds, so its concept needs to be rethought and expanded to adapt to diverse communication scenarios (Zhang, 2018).

Therefore, this study chooses film as the object of analysis to explore the issue of social identity construction.

Through the multi-modal medium of movies, it can cover not only language but also elements such as images and sounds, to understand the diversity and complexity of contexts more comprehensively. In movies, various elements, such as language, behavior, appearance, and environment of the character roles constitute their contexts. By analyzing the behavior, speech, and environment of character roles in films, one can gain a deeper understanding of how social identities are constructed and expressed in multi-modal environments. Therefore, through the movie as a research object, the role and influence of context in multi-modal environments can be understood more deeply, to provide more specific and richer theoretical support for the redefinition of the concept of context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Choosing Barbie as a Research Subject

Barbie is a 2023 fantasy comedy film directed by Greta Gerwig； Based on the eponymous fashion dolls, it is the first live-action Barbie film after numerous animated films and specials. It is also a commentary regarding patriarchy and the effects of feminism.

Barbie is more than just a film; it is a global cultural phenomenon. By analyzing gender portrayal, dialogue content, and social role-playing scenes, people can better uncover society's norms in shaping women's image and gender roles. For instance, examining Barbie's appearance, dialogue, and context reveals cultural ideals of female beauty and gender role expectations, deepening our sociolinguistic understanding of contemporary perceptions of femininity and gender roles.

As a multi-modal medium, a film contains a variety of elements, such as words, images, and sounds. Barbie is not only presented in terms of plot and dialogue, but also expresses and portrays its characters in a variety of ways, such as through costumes and set design. By analyzing these different modalities comprehensively, the gender messages and social identities conveyed in the film can be more fully understood.

Released in 2023, Barbie reflects contemporary society's concerns about gender and identity. With heightened attention to topics like gender equality and identity, societal perceptions of gender roles have shifted. Analyzing the film's portrayal of gender expression and social roles enables us to explore evolving attitudes towards gender and identity.

3.2 Application of Systemic-functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Halliday (1985, 1994) introduced three primary meta-functions of language within the functional grammar, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions: The ideational function represents events objectively and subjectively; The interpersonal function involves engaging with others and influencing their behavior; The textual function organizes information and relationships between messages. Kress and Leeuwen (2020) expanded these meta-functions to encompass other symbol systems, including visual symbols and devised a theory known as visual grammar. The theory elaborates on the three functions of representation, interaction, and composition: Representation explores image connections; Visual interaction delves into social dynamics; Compositional meaning scrutinizes spatial message arrangements.(Kress & Leeuwen, 2020).

Zhang (2009) pointed out that there are two main types of interactions between multiple modalities, namely complementary and non-complementary relationships. The object of this study is film, and there exists a non-reinforcing relationship in the complementary relationship, i.e., such as multiple modalities are indispensable and complementary to each other, and cooperate with each other in the form of coordination, jointress, or crossover.

At present, the comprehensive framework of multi-modal discourse in China is mainly composed of the following dimensions: cultural dimension, contextual dimension, content dimension, and expression dimension (Zhang, 2009). This paper will study the social identity theory embodied in the movie Barbie from the perspective of socio-linguistics from the first three aspects.

4. Analysis

4.1 Cultural Dimension

The cultural dimension is the key dimension that makes multi-modal communication possible, and the traditions, forms, and techniques of communication are determined by this dimension; This dimension includes the ideology consisting of human thinking patterns, philosophies, habits, and all the subtle rules of society, and the communicative procedures or structural potentials that can concretely realize this ideology (Zhang, 2009). Barbie

highlights women's social identity, and an analysis of the film's images, lines, and plot reveals that the social image of 'women' constructed in the film can be interpreted in terms of image building, character relationships, and value orientation.

4.1.1 Image Building

The movie portrays Barbie's initial design as being influenced by the German Lili Doll, an adult doll, allowing Barbie to adopt less realistic body proportions and imagery, such as prominent breasts. This design choice reflects societal expectations and standards regarding the female body within a patriarchal context. The protagonist of the film identifies herself as a "classic", with her identity and profession presented ambiguously, creating space for various interpretations and possibilities. However, being labeled as a "classic" also imposes constraints, as she is expected to maintain eternal youth, uphold certain standards of beauty, and embrace a glamorous lifestyle. When faced with a day filled with imperfections and the prospect of losing her perceived perfection, she experiences a crisis of identity and existential questioning, pondering the purpose of her existence and grappling with notions of self-worth.

4.1.2 Character Relationships

In the movie, there is a complex mother-daughter dynamic between Gloria and her daughter Sasha. A Mattel employee, Gloria reflects on her troubled relationship with her daughter by altering Barbie's image, symbolizing a struggle with idealized roles. This disruption hints at Gloria's own complexities with maternal expectations, mirroring her fear of losing her daughter. The narrative culminates in Barbie's symbolic journey towards independence, representing the transition from childhood to adulthood and the need for moderate separation from the mother figure. The portrayal of this mother-daughter relationship emphasizes the important role that women play in the family and their commitment to their families and emotions, thus enhancing the perceived value of women in society. The portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship demonstrates the diversity and complexity of women's identities and breaks down stereotypes.

4.1.3 Value Orientation

In the movie's Barbie Land setting, women are not just beautiful, but also wise and powerful; they can be both Nobel Prize winners and presidents; they are no longer mothers, or even just beautiful; they are everything in the world. While showing the diversity of female characters, this also implies a trap of idealization. The image that Barbie represents is too perfect forming an unrealistic imagination. Therefore, the setting of Barbie Land is actually an escape from reality and fails to truly reflect the diversity and natural characteristics of women.

4.2 Contextual Dimension

At the contextual level, multimodal discourse is characterized by discourse scope, tone, and mode (Zhang, 2009). The film examines the construction of women's social identities across distinct environments. Uniquely, the film juxtaposes the virtual Barbie Land with the real world, breaking traditional narrative conventions and enabling the protagonist to traverse these realms. The heroine, a doll from Barbie Land, encounters challenges and scrutiny in the real world, while her counterpart Ken undergoes a transformation from a secondary character to a respected figure. By contrasting these worlds, the film elucidates the feminist assertion that patriarchy is a construct, rendering it unambiguously. The following contextual analysis will use the conversation between Barbie and Ken when they first cross over to the real world as an example.

4.2.1 Discourse Scope

The themes Barbie and Ken talk about in the movie are real-world specifics (e.g., real-world beaches and male workers on construction sites) and personal feelings about coming to the real world (e.g., Barbie feeling uncomfortable with the male gaze while Ken sees it as a sign of respect). It can be seen from the movie that in the real world, women's social identities are usually shaped by the male gaze and are of a lower social status and more easily offended to some extent.

4.2.2 Discourse Tone

Barbie's tone of voice becomes visibly angry after being harassed by a man, and expresses her loss after seeing that the real world is dominated by men (i.e., construction sites are filled with male workers); whereas Ken is pleasantly surprised and proud of the reversal of the dominant gender, which shows that there is a clear change in mood when a woman's identity, which has been dominated by feminist ideology, is questioned and undermined, and which further highlights the clash between the feminist world of Barbie and the patriarchal reality of the world.

4.2.3 Discourse Mode

In the scene where Barbie is taken to the police station to have her record kept because she fought back against her sexual harasser, Barbie talks to the police officer in an unnatural tone of voice, moves in a rushed manner, and is deeply suspicious of her attire, while Ken revels in the situation, taking the police officer's 'flirting' as a compliment, and is calm and collected. Barbie's manner of speaking reflects a possible lower social status or disadvantaged position in the power structure, whereas Ken, on the contrary, demonstrates control of his situation and adaptability to the environment.

4.3 Content Dimension

The content level is divided into the meaning level and the formal level. The formal level includes modalities such as language, image, sound, and touch, and the meaning level includes the three meta-functions of discourse (Zhang, 2009). Based on the theory of Systemic Functional Grammar and the theory of Visual Grammar, this paper will select the images and text subtitles in the screenshots of Barbie, and analyze how the image modality, the text modality, and the modalities collaborate with each other to construct the social image of women.

4.3.1 Visual Image Modalities

Fig. 1.   ([Weird Barbie leading Barbie to make a choice], 2019)

Fig. 2. ([Barbie and Granny looking at each other], 2019)

Fig. 3.([Ken challenging Barbie to a fight], 2019)

Fig. 4. ([Barbie and the founder clasping hands], 2019)

According to Kress and Leeuwen (2020), the meaning of reproduction indicates that images can characterize the construction of experiences of the external world; The meaning of image reproduction is categorized into narrative and conceptual reproduction, and the presence or absence of vectors is a mark of distinction between narrative and conceptual images, with vectors present in narrative images. This study will mainly analyze the

narrative reproduction in movies. Vectors connect participants in narrative images into behavioral, reactive, verbal, and psychological processes (Kress & Leeuwen, 2020), which correspond to the material, psychological, and verbal processes in systemic functional linguistics. The screenshots depict various instances of reactive processes. In Fig.1, Barbie's line of sight serves as a vector connecting the high heels and flats in Weird Barbie's hands, an interaction that symbolizes the clash between stereotypical images of femininity and the complex experience of self-consciousness and emotion in the real world. The gaze of the responder in Fig.2 forms a vector. Barbie's (the responder) gaze (the vector) is directed at the grandmother (the phenomenon), which creates a deep emotional resonance and expresses Barbie's first experience of real female identity. In Fig.3 Barbie's (the responder) gaze (vector) towards the towering Ken (Phenomenon) full of shock and anger symbolizes women's dissatisfaction with male dominance in Barbie Land, reflecting the wider social challenges faced by women. The vector in Fig.4 is the diagonal line formed by the arms of the action participants, an interaction that symbolizes Barbie's link to the real world and establishes her identity as a real woman.

4.3.2 Linguistic Modalities

Linguistic modality in a movie is mainly the subtitles of the lines. This paper analyzes the linguistic modality according to the three meta-functions proposed by Halliday (1973; 1985), namely conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning, and discourse meaning, and collects the text of the movie's lines, with the following examples:

1) I have no difficulty holding both logic and feeling at the same time, and it does not diminish my powers, it expands them.

2) We will fix everything so that all women in the Real World can be happy and powerful.

3) You've been making women feel bad about themselves since you were invented; you represent everything wrong with our culture-- sexualized capitalism, unrealistic physical ideals......

4) You have to be thin but not too thin, and you can never say you want to be thin, you have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin; You have to have money, but you can't ask for money, because that's crass; You have to be a boss but you can't be mean; You have to lead, but you can't squash other people's ideas; You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time; You have to be career woman but also always be looking out for other people......

5) Humans make things up like patriarchy and Barbie, just to deal with how uncomfortable it is.

6) We mothers stand still so our daughters can look back to see how far they've come.

The lines are grouped into two types: material and relational processes. Lines 1 and 4 discuss relationships between participants, emphasizing social roles and attributes. Lines 2, 3, 5, and 6 describe physical actions, focusing on how participants interact. These lines contrast the Barbie world's female dominance with the real world's male-dominated society. In the Barbie world, women are portrayed as capable and powerful, while in reality, they face challenges and inequalities. The mother-daughter relationship structure further highlights the complexities of women's social identity.

The above lines use declarative sentences except for the fourth sentence which uses imperative sentences. The fourth sentence expresses commands through the use of imperative sentences, which reflect the discipline of women's social identity and the exploitation of women's freedom under the patriarchy in the real world.

4.3.3 Synergistic Relationship between Visual Image Modality and Linguistic Modality

Zhang (2009) pointed out that the two relationships between verbal modality and image modality are complementary and non-complementary. The main role of the textual modality of this movie is to clearly express specific information that cannot be expressed through images.

For example, in Screenshot 1 of the movie, when the audience sees the two pairs of shoes that are completely different from each other and doesn't know what they represent, the line 'You can go back to your regular life, or you can know the truth about the universe. The choice is now yours.' explains the meaning of Barbie's behavior to the audience. In Screenshot 3, Barbie is looking up at Ken, and this kind of visual projection is not enough to reflect the change in the social status of both genders after the change of Barbie's world to a patriarchal one, and it needs to be further understood by the audience in combination with the line 'I could have ruled that world, but I don't need any of those things here'.

Therefore, most of the relationships between verbal and visual modalities in this film are non-reinforcing relationships in a complementary relationship, jointly expressing Barbie's female social identity in different worlds, and jointly shaping Barbie's growth from a blind 'perfect woman' conforming to stereotypes to a real

woman with her own sense of autonomy and emotions.

5. Findings

This paper attempts to analyze the use and embodiment of social identity theory in the socio-linguistic perspective using a multi-modal research methodology with the movie Barbie as the object of study, and the conclusions of the study are drawn as follows:

1) In Barbie, the linguistic representations of female characters exhibit specific social gender norms. The employment of polite expressions, feminine words, and a softer voice tone not only facilitates communication but also underscores their roles within the gender construction. These linguistic tools reinforce the perception of female characters as respectful, beautiful, and gentle, thereby deepening their societal gender identity.

2) Body language and visuals reflect Barbie's female characters' social identity. They conform to aesthetic standards, wearing fashionable yet revealing clothes, and exhibiting confident body language. This appeals to audiences and solidifies their status. Slim figures, stylish hair, and confident poses enhance their elegance and societal influence, highlighting their personality and role in the movie.

3) In Barbie, the dialogue between characters profoundly illustrates power dynamics and societal trends rooted in gender identity theory. The complexity of the power structure is revealed, spotlighting the diverse roles men and women play based on their gender. Notably, traditional female characters exhibit passivity in their communication, reflecting both their societal disadvantage and the limitations imposed by traditional gender norms.

6. Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the use and embodiment of social identity theory in the socio-linguistic perspective in the movie Barbie provides a compelling case for analyzing gender representation in media. Comparing these findings to existing literature and research, there is a consistent pattern in which linguistic and visual cues contribute to the construction and reinforcement of gender norms.

The linguistic representations of female characters in Barbie align with previous research on gendered language, highlighting how polite expressions, feminine words, and softer tones reinforce traditional expectations of women as respectful, beautiful, and gentle. Similarly, analyzing body language and visuals in Barbie complements research on visual gender representations, emphasizing aesthetics, fashion, and confident poses to solidify the status and societal influence of female characters.

However, when comparing these findings to the original expectations, it is worth noting that the study reveals a more complex picture than traditional gender norms. In the film Barbie Land, women are portrayed as not just beautiful but also wise and powerful. They are no longer limited to being just mothers or objects of beauty; they encompass everything in this world. However, as the story unfolds, it becomes evident that this portrayal is a trap. Barbie represents stereotypes and unrealistic expectations. It presents an idealized version of femininity that is toxic. This is highlighted when Barbie undergoes a gynecological examination at the end of the movie, symbolizing the need for women to return to reality and embrace their true selves. The dialogue between characters highlights the complexity of power dynamics and societal trends rooted in gender identity theory. This suggests that while Barbie may conform to some traditional gender norms, it also provides opportunities for reflecting on and challenging these norms.

7. Conclusion

The multi-modal analysis of the movie Barbie reveals how social identity theory is intricately woven into the socio-linguistic fabric of the film. The findings demonstrate that Barbie serves as a powerful medium for exploring gender roles and norms in contemporary society.

The linguistic representations in Barbie reinforce traditional gender norms, portraying female characters through polite expressions, feminine words, and softer tones that emphasize their roles as respectful, beautiful, and gentle. This framing contributes to the perpetuation of traditional gender roles. Similarly, the visual and bodily representations of female characters align with societal expectations of femininity, showcasing fashionable yet revealing clothing, slim figures, stylish hair, and confident poses that solidify their status and societal influence. These visual cues shape gender perceptions and identities among audiences. Additionally, the dialogue in Barbie

reveals the complexity of power dynamics and societal trends grounded in gender identity theory, highlighting the diverse roles of both genders while also exposing the limitations imposed by traditional norms, particularly on women.

Despite the above findings in the literature, the significance of which cannot be ignored, there are some limitations to these findings, primarily due to their focus on a single cultural product. Future research could expand the scope to include other media products, such as other films, television shows, or advertisements, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of gender representation in media. Additionally, future studies could explore how audiences interpret and respond to these representations, providing further insights into the impact of media on gender identities.

Overall, this paper provides valuable insights into the use and embodiment of social identity theory in the socio-linguistic perspective in the movie Barbie. It demonstrates how media products can shape and influence gender perceptions and identities, while also highlighting the limitations of traditional gender norms.

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