

Comparative Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Functional Roles of Technology and Users in Barbie 2023 Feminism & Hegemonic Masculinity in Technology

Mr. LAU, Hok-Yin

Saint Francis University, Hong Kong

Abstract

This paper conducts comparative multimodal discourse analysis of roles of technology in the feminist Barbieland and in the patriarchal Kenland, in a recent movie, Barbie, in order to investigate the functional relation between social ideologies and technology. The theoretical framework is Bateman's genre and multimodality, combined with Iedema's level of analysis in film genres, to reveal multi-perspectives of movie contents from which to analyze roles of technology in relation to users. With the investigation centered upon technology, this paper leverages the analytical framework concerning the semiotic approach to functional roles of technology in the signifier-signified system, which assume the relevance and expressiveness of objects. Reflections of functional roles of technology are evaluated by use of content coding processing with reference to Van Leeuwen's discursive tools for critical analysis. The major findings are multifold. Firstly, unlike technology in Barbieland for occupational, entertainment and humanitarian purposes benefiting both sexes to emphasize social equality and individualism, technology in Kenland is exclusive to men to declare domination. Secondly, Kens' technology utilized in a violent manner, unlike that in Barbieland used in careful and everyday fashion, connotatively masculinizes manhood to ideologically spread and terrifyingly declare sovereignty of patriarchy to both sexes, and is used to conceal male powerlessness. Thirdly, for the aesthetic function, technology in Barbieland is mostly pink, plastic and smooth in texture, which connotes dreamy fantasy and benevolence to reinforce the notions of womanhood and matriarchy, whereas Kens' is darker, more concrete and functionally effective and realistic to declare the break from the Barbie fantasy.

Keywords: Barbie, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Feminist, Patriarchal, Technology