A *Separation*, an Ideological Rift in the Iranian Society and Culture: Media, Discourse and Ideology

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Abstract

Media can be a good representation of dominant ideologies in society. The analysis of such discourse can shed light on the mental and social structures of people in society. Adopting van Dijk's (1995) layout of discourse ideology and his (2000) practical and general outline of ideological analysis, this study analyzes the Iranian movie *A Separation*, the winner of the 84th Annual Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film. The data are transcribed, modified, and then translated into English. What is of particular interest to the authors is to examine the discourse of the movie based on van Dijk's (1995) layout of discourse ideology which tries to approach ideology by ensuring the triangulation of *society*, *cognition,* and *discourse*. The authors are more interested in analyzing people's simple daily ideological behaviors which are rooted in their cognition and dominate their social activities. Having mapped these specific terrains, the authors attempt an examination of the ideologies of the film on levels of *meaning*, *forms,* and *action and interaction*.

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1. Introduction

The field of language ideology, as the unpacking of language in the context of social processes, seems to have a pedigree in linguistic anthropology and has been bred primarily with the aim of unveiling the "mediating links between social forms and forms of talk" (Woolard, 1998, p. 3). Accordingly, the study of media discourse has, for at least thirty-five years, turned its attention to the nexus between language and ideology. This relationship designates the extent to which linguistic structures used in the media carry the emblems of ideological structures and mechanisms. Moreover, recent development in communication research leaves little doubt that mass media has gained considerable momentum in the realm of discourse analysis.

As the pioneer of studies of this kind, Fowler (Fowler, 1991; Fowler et al., 1979) engendered the idea that the language used in the media might carry ideological meaning. As a case in point, he contends that particular groups, classes, ethnicities, genders, etc. are negatively tagged in the media and that lexicalization, or the use of labels for particular groups or individuals, are being observed in the media excessively (Fowler, 1991), hence the reproduction of asymmetrical power relations among different sections in society. In a similar vein of argument, deeply inspired by the works of sociologists such as Durkheim and Bourdieu, Couldry (2003) maintains that media should be perceived not merely as a body of produced texts and structures, but as the practices which are more or less bound with the reproduction of some sort of order in society.

Within the domain of media discourse studies, language ideology has enthralled many scholars to date (e.g., Jaffe, 2007; Johnson & Ensslin, 2007; Park, 2010; Spitulnic, 1998; Spitzmuller, 2007; Thurlow, 2007). Thus far, scholars have presumably tried to investigate how linguistic phenomena help decipher the underlying meanings and values through production and reproduction of "conventional indexical ties" between the "features […] of the given language" and "broader cultural representations of the speakers in terms of nationality […] morality and so forth" (Milani & Johnson, 2010, p. 4). More specifically, they have sought to figure out the social mechanism through which ideas and beliefs about language practices are produced, circulated, or challenged (p. 4).

Apparently, as far as the media are concerned, this aim cannot be fully achieved unless one closely scrutinizes the text in association with the practices mediated by media. This brings us to Thompson's (1990) notion of 'fallacy of internalism' which made Blommaert (2005) argue against placing the "power of ideologies […] in the message alone" (p. 163). Reasoning along similar lines, research has demonstrated (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2006; Johnson & Ensslin, 2007) that though media have largely been considered as 'institutions of power' (Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998), they are not powerful solely by virtue of their institutional status; conversely, as suggested by Johnson and Milani (2010), the power of media should be studied through meticulous textual, ethnographic and social deconstruction.

2. Theoretical Framework

A cornucopia of issues has recently been investigated in studies on media discourse. Moschonas and Spitzmuller (2010) have comparatively analyzed the corrective utterances and prescriptivist practices in relation to media language in the Greek and German press. In so doing, they highlighted the fact that such practices follow a 'standard language ideology' that despises linguistic variation and aims at bringing to the fore a sort of linguistic unity (Milroy & Milroy, 1998). In another study, Park (2010) unveils how a broadcasting corporation in Korea presents two game shows through a national television

channel and, having employed famous Korean celebrities, presents itself as the only source of legitimate language knowledge. Moreover, Bachmann (2010) analyzes two television programs in Brazil, namely *Planeta Brasil* and *America Legal*. The analysis clearly shows that there is a kind of 'monolingual bias' which constrains the representation of multilingual language practices of the Brazilian migrants. This finding was found to be in line with Jaff's (2007) analysis of a TV documentary in Corsica where bilingualism was looked at as a byproduct of schooling rather than as a core element of pedagogical practice, hence endorsing a monoglot ideology (Silverstein, 1996) as it was seen in Bachmann's (2010) study. In his attempts to unpack the ideologies surrounding the use of Cypriot Greek language in television series in Cyprus, Georgiou (2010) found out that such a language variety is solely used for humorous purposes and thus regarded as 'non-standard'. Likewise, Gieve and Norton (2007) pointed to the fact that the representation of linguistic differences on TV channels in the UK has largely been avoided.

In helping researchers to concoct principled hypotheses about a range of issues in media discourse studies, van Dijk (1998) has put forward the most all-embracing examination of the elaborate associations among language, ideology and media. In 1995, he defined ideology as the fundamental beliefs or thoughts shared among the members of a given society. Looked at from this perspective, ideologies are "the basic frameworks for organizing the social cognition shared by members of social groups, organizations or institutions" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18). In plain English, ideologies are both social and cognitive; that is to say, they are produced and reproduced within social practices while shaping the cognitive schema of the members. The theory which is suggested here is multidisciplinary in the sense that it tries to approach ideology by ensuring the triangulation of *society*, *cognition,* and

discourse within the domain of critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1995).

While research in the area of discourse analysis has drawn the attention of many researchers to the social and political functions of ideologies, the mental or cognitive dimension of ideologies has been lamentably left untouched (cf. van Dijk, 2006). Put another way, not only is it necessary to decipher and gain acuity concerning the true nature of ideology and its relations with discourse and society, but it also behooves us to reflect on the mental characteristics of ideologies as well. In plain English, ideologies provide people with a system of beliefs represented as a schema including conventional categories which let one comprehend, verify, or refuse an ideology. Stemming from the essential assets of a social group, these categories present somehow fixed patterns through which one can identify the member of a given social group. These patterns of basic categories consist of (a) *membership criteria*, i.e. who belongs and who does not, (b) *typical activities*, i.e. what people do, (c) *overall aims*, i.e. what people are after and their motives, (d) *norms and values*, i.e. what people consider as appropriate or inappropriate for themselves, (e) *position*, i.e. their relationship with others, and (f) *resources*, i.e. the ones accessing to their group resources. These given categories represent a 'group self-schema', by providing the members with a sense of a joint group to identify with and creating a map in others' mind to identify who belongs to a given group.

All in all, granted that the societal, institutional and group structures cannot have direct connection with discourse structures (i.e., propositional and formal structures), cognitive structures and mental models, as van Dijk (1998) has pointed out, thus take on the role of a mediator between discourse and society. Nonetheless, compared to the large body of research on political news and new- media technologies (see Amouzadeh, 2008; Bauman, 2010; Ensslin, 2010; Johnson, Milani &

Upton, 2010; Mazid, 2007; Mullany, 2002; Zimmer, 2005) concerning the implicit representation of underlying language ideologies, rather less attention has so far been directed at the social and psychological characteristics of ideologies (cf. van Dijk, 2006). Accordingly, this study aims at covering this lacuna. In this article, discourse ideology, in van Dijk's (1995) words, will be discussed.

3. Methodology

3.1. Materials

The data gathered for the purpose of this study were extracted from one of the most famous and popular Iranian movies, *A separation.* This movie features an Iranian couple who have a tough decision to make: Simin wants the family to live abroad to better the chances in life for their only daughter, Termeh. Nader, however, insists on staying in Iran to take care of his father, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. The argument leaves the couple but one choice: divorce. But the consequences go far beyond anything they had ever expected. The movie was aired in 2011. In 2012, for the first time in the history of the country, the movie won the 84th Annual Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film. It also gained the 61st Golden Bear OF Berlin International Film Festival for best film, the silver bears for best actor and actress, the 69th Golden Globe Awards for the best Foreign Language Film. It has been nominated, inter alia, for the Best Original Screenplay Academy Award.

3.2. Coding and Data Analysis

The data were transcribed, modified and then translated into English. The underlying ideological representation of the movie was analyzed based on van Dijk's (1995) conception of discourse ideology. Van Dijk believes that the ideological analysis of discourse should be undertaken at three levels of social analysis, cognitive analysis, and discourse analysis.

4. Results

The discourse analysis of the movie was also conducted on three levels of (a) meaning, (b) forms, and (c) action and interaction (Table 1). In doing so, the authors have made attempts to uncover the general dominant ideologies of the movie.

Table 1
Van Dijk's Practical and General Layout of Ideological Analysis

Meaning	1. Topic 2. Level of description 3.Implication and presupposition 4. Local coherence 5. Synonymy/ paraphrase 6. Contrast 7. Examples/illustrations 8. Disclaimers
Forms	
Propositional structures	1. Actor 2. Modality 3. Evidentiality 4. Hedging, vagueness 5. topoi
Formal structures	
Sentence syntax	
Discourse forms	
Argumentation	
Rhetoric	Figures of Style
Action and interaction	

4.1. Meaning

4.1.1. Topic

At first glance, *A Separation* seems to be the story of a legal divorce and the separation of an ingenuous couple. As it may be seen in the first scene in the courtroom, *Nader* and *Simin* are on the verge of separation and getting divorce. Yet, the movie in reality displays the separation of two distinct lifestyles. Two lifestyles, grounded in two different outlooks in life, have their own unique ideologies. Be that as it may, the story reveals how these two outlooks are totally separate so much so that their compatibility and alignment seem to be quite impossible. In other words, the separation is not caused due to some minor issues such as doing the laundry or cooking foods, etc. that typically occur at home. Conversely, this separation, the authors argue, is imposed from inside _ i.e. originated from two different outlooks in life.

4.1.2. Level of Description

At this level, four dominant ideologies are mapped out respectively.

4.1.2.1. Secrecy and Lies

We may contend that the main ideology of the movie which has been represented in many scenes and has been carved on people's minds in society (not the one induced by the movie per se) is the secrecy and lies prevalent among the people. In this movie, many people lie, misrepresent, falsify, or hide facts. We may say that the mental models which are under the influence of particular individual or group ideologies and which help the representation of events from the individual's viewpoint are to a great extent influenced by the ideology of secrecy. As van Dijk (1995) points out, these mental models do not simply represent personal experiences but they are used as a scale for the understanding and production of our actions and speech. Put another way, people's interactions, whether in speech or

deed, are based on their level of understanding of the mental models. Interestingly, the movie transcends this ideology beyond the issue of social class distinction or the religiosity of people to the extent that the members of each social class, each holding their own view of religion, in one way or another try to lie and hide facts from others wherever they see their lives have been put in danger.

4.1.2.2. Judgment

The second hidden ideology, induced by the movie, is the issue of people's judgment and observation. All people in society are involved in questioning, judging, and making decision _ decisions which can determine or change the fate of others, hence the issue of human liability or responsibility towards one's most commonplace behaviors. Sometimes even the most commonplace behaviors may lead us to unbelievable paths. Many scenes are reconstructed as if the audience, as a hidden observer, should judge between the actors and actresses _ a judgment whose liability is left for the audience to take. This dominant ideology in the movie shows that, based on their mental structure and the respective cognitive models, most people in society take inquisitive looks at the events, the looks which necessarily beget judgment and responsibility. Most simply put, the movie points to the fact that making judgments are now part and parcel of people's worldview and, therefore, all people should take serious considerations regarding the judgment they make and, accordingly, take responsibility for its various consequences.

4.1.2.3. Law and Faith

The third ideology of the movie elucidates the role of law and faith and the contrast between these two in everyday life. Indeed, the law is represented in the movie at the outset: From the very beginning, the law should decide for the case of *Nader* and *Simin*. On the other hand, people's faith and beliefs are illustrated from the very beginning: according to her own

beliefs, *Simin* does not deem the conditions of the country for her daughter to grow up in. *Raziyeh* is a faithful woman; she leaves her work since she believes that cleaning the old man is not religiously allowed. The representation of these two factors very well shows that all people, in their mental structure and cognitive model which are the cause of their speech or deeds in society, are aware of the role of law and faith and unconsciously base their decisions upon these two. In this contrast, the movie gives superiority to faith in the sense that not only can the actors and actresses in the movie lie to law by committing perjury, but also they can hide some secrets from the judges. When it comes to faith, however, nobody can lie to her faith: This is faith, not law, which makes *Raziyeh* narrate how her mishap took place on the street.

4.1.2.4. Social Class

A Separation clearly represents class distinctions, inequality, misunderstanding, and despise among social classes. The stairs play a determining role in the representation of this ideology. The workers, while carrying the piano upstairs, argue with *Simin* and demand to be paid more money. *Raziyeh* falls from the same stairs. *Nader*, along with the neighbors, contends that *Raziyeh* has fallen on the upper-echelon but *Raziyeh* says she has fallen on the lower-echelon which illustrates the social class distinction. To further complicate matters, 'money' is depicted as another factor in the widening of this social class gap. *Nader* is a bank employee and the bank is chosen as the setting wherein *Nader* and *Hojat* are supposed to meet; this also adds impetus to our contention that the prevailing distinction between the two social classes is to a great extent due to 'money matters'. As a whole, the ideology which points to the fact that the working class people seek the cause of their misery in the gap that exists between the middle class and the social class with which they themselves are associated and that from

early childhood this ideology shapes the child's mental schema, made up of hatred and vengeance, is skillfully represented.

4.1.3. Implication and Presupposition

The film puts forward several presuppositions, representing the ideology which is dominant in the life of the story's personages. As a case in point, once the money is lost, according to the ideology of the middle class, the woman who works at the house (*Raziyeh*) would typically be the target of the arrow of accusation. On the other hand, by virtue of *Nader*'s higher social status, *Ms. Ghahrayee* considers him to be a noble person and is ready to testify against his plaintiff, though she is not absolutely sure of his innocence. In many scenes, the movie assigns the audience the role of hidden observers to make presuppositions in their minds and, in so doing, make their own judgment _ a judgment whose unquestionable consequences would be nothing but turbulence and bewilderment. To give but one example, let us consider the scene in which *Nader* and his family are in black, which can be a sign of the death of *Nader*'s father, the audience might ask the question '*Now that Nader's dependence on his father is alleviated and that he has no longer any excuse to stay, why does he insist on getting divorce?*'

4.1.4. Local Coherence

A Separation can be said to be consisting of two sections: All the events that take place (a) before and (b) after the death of *Razieh*'s unborn child. The first section centers on a sequence of events which is based on cause and effect and finally leads to the occurrence of the calamity. The second section is based on those situations which represent the shaping of the characters relative to their surrounding events. In fact, the former is developed based on a narration and the latter is evolved from some sort of characterization. In *A Separation*, the narration and the characters are so intertwined that can hardly be separated. Indeed, the hidden idea of the story is made up

of the same combination. In other words, the sequence of events in the story illustrates a disappointing atmosphere which is created as a result of the intentional or unintentional lies and secrecy of the characters _ an atmosphere which apparently darkens the route to future

for *Termeh* and other children of divorce.

4.1.5. Synonymy/Paraphrase

Somewhere in the movie, *Termeh* is rehearsing her courses with her father:

Extract 1

*Nader***:** Find the Persian equivalent for these words: Maquette

*Termeh***:** *Nemoonak*

*Nader***:** Guarantee?

*Termeh***:** *Tazmin; Zemaanat*

*Nader***:** But this is Arabic; give the Persian equivalent.

*Termeh***:** My teacher says …

*Nader***:** Don't ever tell this sentence to me! What is wrong is wrong, whoever says, wherever you see it. For the word 'guarantee', write down […]

*Termeh***:** If I write something else, my teacher will give me a low score.

*Nader***:** No problem dear, let her do it; write down *'poshtvaaneh'*.

In the above example, Nader's ideology is very well illustrated. In spite of the fact that both Persian equivalents '*Tazmin*' and '*Poshtvaaneh*' are used for the English word '*Guarantee*', because '*tazmin*' is an Arabic word, *Nader* does not accept it even if it is the only acceptable term for *Termeh*'s teacher. It is important to note that the continuing existence of Arabic lexicon is highly disapproved by the younger educated generation in Iran so that based on their 'beliefs' they shun its usage.

4.1.6. Contrast

A Separation delicately illuminates the economic crisis of the working class and the emotional and relational crises of the middle class. That is to say, the separation of *Nader* and *Simin* has been brought about not because of any economic crisis but due to their different attitudes to life which, in turn, have engendered a relational and as a result an

emotional crisis. On the contrary, the separation of *Raziyeh* and *Hojat* is an economic crisis. In its representation of the contrast between these two crises, the movie very well illustrates how the children of these two social classes are involved in these crises (emotional or economic) and a future replete with bewilderment and fear. As it was already discussed, the film also delicately illuminates the contrast between law and faith. In this contrast, people's beliefs and faith form the cornerstones of order and discipline in society.

4.1.7. Examples/Illustrations

The examples and illustrations are pieces of evidence to support the predetermined propositions. In this section, the authors provide the readers with a sample in which the story of a child's drawing develops into a proposition that has roots in the ideological outlooks on the working class.

Extract 2

Ms. Ghahrayee: What was the cause of your mother's stomachache? Did you father beat her? Didn't he admonish your mom because she hadn't let him know that she was working in other people's house? Did he beat her?

Somiyeh: My mom and dad don't fight!

Ms. Ghahrayee: Then why did your drawing show that they were fighting? You showed me!

Somiyeh: […] They didn't fight any longer.

Ms. Ghahrayee: No longer? Are you sure?

In this example, *Ms. Ghahrayee* takes *Somiyeh*'s drawing as evidence that *Raziyeh* and *Hojat* have probably been involved in a quarrel and that their fight has led to the fetal death. The authors argue that it has roots in the ideological outlooks on the working class.

4.1.8. Disclaimers

In the contrast between law and faith, Nader brilliantly makes use of *Raziyeh*'s religious beliefs:

Extract 3

*Nader***:** Look! I have written the cheque. I'll give it to you. There is no problem. It is done. […] But I have a request. Madam (to *Raziyeh*)! You are a believer; please fetch a Quran (the central Islamic text) and take oath that I have caused your child's abortion.

The disclaimer is evident in this example: if there is no problem, what is the need to take oath? The second sentence clearly contradicts the first sentence.

4.2. Forms

4.2.1. Propositional Structures

4.2.1.1. Actor Description

The story is centered upon describing the life of two young couples. *Nader*, *Simin* and their daughter, *Termeh*, are representatives of the upper-middle class whereas *Hojat*, *Raziyeh* and their little daughter, *Somiyeh*, are representatives of the working class. Nader is a fundamentalist, an advocate of righteousness and honesty, one who will not believe anything unless it is proved to him: '*What is wrong is wrong, whoever says it, wherever it is written*.' *Simin*, on the other hand, is a modernist and a transaction person who tries to solve her problems by spending money: '*I talked to him; I tried hard to persuade him to take only 15, rather than 40, million tomans as*

blood money.' *Raziyeh*, like *Nader*, is a fundamentalist albeit with religious principles and beliefs: '*In my religion, it is not true to clean the old man myself*.' *Hojat* is a debtor and unemployed man who has got different life outlooks because of the difficult conditions he has been living in: '*Are your children those of human beings? Are our children those of dogs?*' In the description of its interwoven characters and situations, the movie highlights the fact that crisis is not dominant on one particular social class; everybody is involved. If the lack of money is not a crisis, then behavioral impairment and lack of communication skills become an issue.

4.2.1.2. Modality

Modal verbs and their functions in sentences can also be related to the representation of events in the story. In *A Separation*, the characters speak and make judgments as if they are absolutely sure in what they claim. For example, *Hojat* is sure that *Raziyeh*'s fall from the stairs has caused the fetal death

whereas he could have put the words in another way: '*He has beaten my wife; it is possible that the fetal death has another cause; yet it does not justify that he has not beaten her.*' The discourse of the movie represented by the characters does not leave any doubt in the mind of the audience that it is the result of internalized beliefs in the minds of characters _ ideological beliefs which make the believers lie, hide and misjudge whenever they see their interests in danger. Meanwhile, *Raziyeh* suffers from some sort of uncertainty when she says '*No, I'm not sure*.' as though a religiosity prevents her from within not to lie or hide something.

4.2.1.3. Evidentiality

Human beings should be responsive to what they say. If they claim something, they should provide relevant evidence. Bringing a simple yet wrong piece of evidence can have unbelievable consequences. For instance, *Ms.*

Ghahrayee, *Termeh*'s tutor, takes *Somiyeh*'s drawing as evidence to justify that the hypothetical altercation between *Raziyeh* and *Hojat* has led to the fetal death; or she takes *Nader*'s social class as evidence to his gentility and, as a result, she takes the wrong oath. Moreover, *Raziyeh* tries to legitimize her own action by claiming that even *Nader* also used to lock the door upon his father. The film very well shows how our simplest and most ordinary behaviors can be pieces of evidence for others and how our ideological outlook can make us take advantage of the situations, though they may sometimes backfire.

4.2.1.4. Hedging/Vagueness

One of the ideological tools is to be able to manage hedging and vagueness. In his discourse, Nader utilizes this tool very skillfully. Below we refer to one example which clearly shows vagueness.

Extract 4
Nader: Push? No, I didn't. I just tried to make her leave the house.
Interrogator: No! Look sir! Explain clearly […]
Nader: I didn't intend to push her out. I just wanted to close the door somehow.
Interrogator: Forget about it. How much distance could there be between the door and the stairs? What could have happened in the interim that caused the incidental abortion?
*Nader***:** I admit that I have gone too far in my words with her.
Interrogator: What does 'too far' mean? Did you push her out with force or not

4.2.1.5. Topoi

The topoi of *A Separation* can be analyzed in terms of 'lies and secrecy', 'human beings in context' and 'no misjudgment.' In the end, the movie leads us towards making judgments. Human beings are always engaged in making (mis)judgments about each other: the characters' judgments of one another, the judge's judgment of complainants and the accused, the judgment of the audience of the characters and their lies and secrecy. Children are watching adults' behaviors. We, as spectators, stand on a platform looking at a

family which is on the verge of collapse and in which the child asks her father whether he has lied to others or not _ a standing point whereby keeps us hidden from the characters who do not know that they are under the heavy weight of others' judgments.

4.2.1.6. Formal Structures

As it was previously mentioned, *A Separation* can be classified into two sections. In the first section, structures take narrative forms as in the second one they are more akin to discursive and argumentative forms. With

respect to the narrative structures, forms are expressed very simple as if the discourse is created out of the social beings themselves. In the argumentative structures, however, the characters seek to depict events according to their own principles and sometimes, based on their own social status, purpose and beliefs. The narrative structure of the story smoothes the way for the developing the hidden ideology of 'lying and secrecy'; On the other hand, the argumentative structure very well reconstructs the internalized hatred and misunderstanding among social classes and sets the scene for the other hidden ideology of the movie: 'No misjudgment allowed!'

4.2.1.7. Sentence Syntax

Granted that the movie is a social melodrama formed by the society and its ideologies, the sentence structures in this movie are short and simple. Most of the sentences are declarative or interrogative. Further, active forms are preferred to passive ones. In the narrative section of the film, structures are chosen in a way so as to make the audience assume that it is the narration of real life. In the argumentative section, though in some cases structures take offensive forms, they have been selected in interrogative and declarative forms. Considering the peculiar feature of the Persian language (Iranian's home language), in most of the sentences represented throughout the movie the subject, or the doer of the action, has been omitted (not as in passive voice) to make the sentences more like the everyday speech.

4.2.1.8. Discourse Forms

Three periods can be distinguished regarding the discourse form of the movie: (a) the first scene in the courtroom, (b) the second scene in the courthouse, and (c) the events that took place in the interim. In the first scene in the courtroom, *Simin* files for divorce because *Nader* is not willing to leave the country with her and states that she does not let her daughter grow up in the current condition of the country. The last scene shows the permanent separation of *Nader* and *Simin*; what happens in the interim can best be described as the illustration of what they say in the courtroom. In other words, the movie is complete by considering merely the first and last scenes. What takes place in the interim stands as evidence of this separation and, accordingly, of the two outlooks on life.

4.2.1.9. Argumentation

The secrecy and lies of the characters, misjudgments, social class differences, and the different attitudes of *Nader* and *Simin* can easily be drawn from their arguments. The altercations between *Nader* and *Simin*, *Nader* and *Raziyeh*, and *Nader* and *Hojat* are replete with paralogisms, violations of communication principles, and inappropriate turn-taking. The characters are always obsessed with proving their points. Here, the readers' attention is drawn to one sample of such argumentation which shows the different outlooks of *Nader* and *Simin* as well as the prevailing social class distinction:

Extract 5
Hojat (to *interrogator*): Sir! […]
Nader (to *Hojat*): I am talking […]
Hojat (to *Nader*): You don't have the right to speak! You should answer!
Interrogator (to *Hojat*): Lower your voice!
Nader (to *Hojat*): Did I ever interrupt your speech?
Hojat (to *Nader*): You are here merely to answer.
Nader (to *Hojat*): Ok. You speak!
Hojat (to *Nader*): If you hadn't done anything wrong, why did you come to the hospital that night to check out my wife's health?

Interrogator: Was there anyone else when the altercation took place?
Raziyeh: Yes, their neighbors were also there.
Hojat (to *interrogator*): Sir! Their neighbors are also like their daughter's tutor.
Nader (to *interrogator*): Sir! Why does he insult all the time?

4.2.1.10. Rhetoric

4.2.1.10.1. Hyperbole

To give but one example of hyperbole in *A Separation*, we refer to a scene in the courthouse where *Simin*'s mother who has come to bail out her son-in-law says: '*He wrangles in a way as if his 18-year-old son has been killed by a knife on the street; I told her wife they were young enough to be able to have another baby next year.*' In fact, she makes use of a hyperbole to undermine the fetal death.

4.2.1.10.2. Simile

Hojat makes use of simile to show his dissatisfaction with the current situation and severely questions the outlooks of middle class people: '*I worked very hard in a shoemaker's shop; at the end, they threw me out like a dog*'; '*why do you think that we fight like animals with our wife and children from day to night?*' These examples wherein *Hojat* analogizes himself to dogs or other animals clearly point to the fact that the working class people are not satisfied with their current situation which,

now being deteriorated by political and economic sanctions, has left greater burden on the working class than on other social classes in the Iranian society.

4.2.1.10.3. Metaphor

In another scene in the movie, *Hojat* uses a metaphor to represent this social class difference: '*Are your children those of human beings? Are our children those of dogs?*' '*If 'face' is not important for them, for me it is.*' The metaphors that he uses for his own children and those of animals or the one whereby he considers his wife to constitute part of his 'face' represent religious outlooks as well as a kind of anger and hatred for middle class people.

4.2.1.10.4. Dramatization

The day before the local investigation, *Nader* uses dramatization to simulate the event; in so doing, he puts his daughter, *Termeh*, in a position to judge, while trying to persuade her that the woman has not fallen because of his angry reaction.

Extract 6

Nader: Stand here as if you are that woman. When you are pushed with force, you will squarely hit somewhere. It is impossible that you hit here, then here, […] and fall off here. Is that right?
Termeh: So why did she fall there?
Nader: I don't know.
Termeh: Why don't you tell them so?
Nader: Look! Leave them alone! I want you to know what has really happened.

4.2.1.10.5. Irony

The name of the movie is *A Separation (of Nader and Simin)*; we thus expect that Nader has filed for divorce; yet from the very

beginning it becomes clear that, ironically, this is *Simin* who has filed for divorce: '*You have filed for divorce […] you made me come to the courthouse!*' It means that we are facing a situational irony. Later on, we come to the

conclusion that in spite of the fact that *Simin* has left the house, she is not really willing to get divorce:

Extract 7
Nader: She will return.
Termeh: She knew you would return.
Termeh: Her suitcase was in the back of the car; she has come to stay.

We also find out that the separation is not a legal one but, ironically, one which is caused because of a rift between two different lifestyles which, in turn, has ignited the emotional or communication crisis.

4.2.1.10.6. Lexicalization

The selection of the vocabulary used in the movie very well illustrates the social status of the characters as well as their beliefs. As a case in point, *Raziyeh*'s religious beliefs can be drawn from the words she uses: '*I swear to God, I swear to the Noble Quran, I swear to Imam Hossein, I swear to Imam Zaman, that this is not allowed, the money is unclean, it is a sin!* […]'. The social class distinction is also evident in *Hojat*'s selection of vocabulary: '*Kesaafat, Bi sharaf, Goore pedare man* […].' *Nader* addresses *Raziyeh* with the pronoun 'you' which represents the social class distinction.

4.3. Action and Interaction

The actions of the characters show some sorts of discrimination, marginalization, delegitimization, and problematization. For instance, *Hojat* tries to threaten others several times which can be interpreted as the hatred of class distinctions or the judge makes use of assertive, directive, and declarative acts to best represent the role of law in life. The contrast between the threats made by *Hojat* and those made by the judge is suggestive of the fact that law has not been able to establish justice in society. The working class people are not satisfied with law because it has not been able to grant them their right.

In the conversational analysis of the text, ignorance of the conversational principles is much evident. They ignore the normal turn-taking principles and do not let their interlocutors speak freely. They are only after self-presentation and only care for their own interests. These actions set the scene for the development of the reconstructed ideology in the movie. In general, the authors believe that conversations are the reconstructed actions. In Table 2, the readers' attention is drawn to some of these actions and interactions many of which represent part of the ideological layout of the story. These actions and interactions may take the form of secrecy and lies, misjudgment, and the hatred and misunderstanding caused by the social class distinction.

Table 2.

Classification of Actions and Interactions in the Movie

No.	Action/interaction	No.	Action/interaction
1	Accusing others	11	Denying claims
2	Addressing others	12	Questioning others' social status
3	Agreeing/disagreeing	13	Interrupting others' speech
4	Asking questions	14	Supporting the people of one's own social class
5	Answering questions	15	Complimenting the people of one's own class

6	Attracting the judge's attention	16	Pointing to the current time and space
7	Challenging the current situation	17	Pointing to the day of the event
8	Legitimizing one's own actions	18	Pointing to problems of one's own family or class
9	Self-criticizing	19	Suggesting an issue
10	Self-defense	20	Thanking the law

5. Discussion

In this paper, the authors made attempts at examining the social and mental aspects of ideology in media discourse and, particularly, films. The authors investigated the discourse of *A Separation*, a melodrama, which for the first time in Iran's cinematic history could win the Oscar award for the Best Foreign Language Film. The discourse analysis of the film clearly puts on a more concrete footing van Dijk's (1995) discussion regarding the extent to which the ideologies are social and how they have penetrated the minds of individuals so much so that they constitute part of individuals' mental schema as well as their perceptual frame of mind and have been the rationale for people's everyday actions and behaviors; this means that ideologies are perceptual. The reconstructed ideology in the movie is involved in issues of social class, fairness, and face, and from this perspective it illustrates a challenge between a modernist middle class family and a poor religious one.

The main ideology of the movie can be referred to as 'rare honesty and frequent lie' and 'secrecy' as well as 'the consequence of lying'. *Farhadi*, the director of the movie, contends that: 'I do not regard the so-called lie as an immoral act. For when you consider a situation in which a person lies and think that s/he has had no other choice or that if you were in his/her shoes you would do the same, you cannot hate that person and claim that s/he has committed an immoral act. We do not hate *Termeh* because of her lying in front of the judge; we do not hate Nader when he says he has been unaware of *Raziyeh*'s pregnancy; we do not hate *Hojat* for making her wife take the wrong oath, though *Raziyeh* doubts that the fetal death has been *Nader*'s fault. In fact, a great part of these evaluations and moral definitions no longer work. The new definition of morality is not based on traditional and civil standards.'

On the other hand, people's sense of responsibility is also an important factor. The director of the movie believes that our life is made up of a series of everyday details. Sometimes even the most routine and commonplace behaviors can lead us to unbelievable places. The degree of such responsibility for human's most commonplace behaviors is very scary and alarming. That is to say, although the behaviors of characters in the movie are very small, their consequences are so huge. In the contrast between law and faith, the movie highlights the power and importance of faith. Therefore, *Raziyeh* cannot accept the blood money at the cost of losing her faith, though the creditors may take her husband to jail.

The movie very well reconstructs and represents the doubt and skepticism that exist in the life of religious people. These people doubt as to whether they should stick to their faith or try to be realists, hence suffering most. *Farhadi* considers this suffering to be a huge and costly dilemma for religious people like *Raziyeh*. The movie does not depict any of the characters as standing on the negative or positive pole; rather, it depends on the ways through which the audience understands and interprets the film. The audience can never be sure who s/he would like to win at last, hence the uninterrupted issue of judging and taking responsibility.

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