

Subjective Stance, Embedded Ideological Clues and Social Representations in Schimmel's Interpretations: A Critical Discourse Enquiry

Muhammad Ilyas Chishti * Muhammad Aslam ** and Ayyaz Qadeer ****

Abstract

The study was an enquiry into the subjective stance, ideological clues and social representations within Schimmel's interpretive discourse on Sufi poetry. Evident discursive construction may well be witnessed through ideological clues embedded within analysis of Sufi poetry, diverse social representations and investigation of the level of adequacy in Schimmel's reconstruction of local culture. Application of linguistic tools of Critical Discourse Analysis to Schimmel's works may well be considered as a significant dimension within Sufi discourse as the CDA tools provide requisite insights into diverse discursive constructions at various fronts. Another significant dimension pertains to a Western scholar's inclination towards Sufi poetry which makes it a study worth investigating. Fairclough's three-dimensional model with textual, discursive and social dimensions was applied to a selected text from Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. The study witnesses various linguistic clues pertaining to subjective stance on the part of Schimmel, evident ideological clues and marked social representations embedded within folk traditions, diverse Sufi practices and local cultural cues. Schimmel while maneuvering through various linguistic tools acquired prominence within her interpretive discourse which was indicative of a considerably adequate reconstruction of local culture within her linguistic investigation of Sufi poetry.

Keywords: Subjective stance, ideological, social representation

*Assistant Professor (English Linguistics), School of Natural Sciences, National University of Sciences and Technology E-mail: ilyas_chishti2007@yahoo.com, dr.chishti@sns.nust.edu.pk

**PhD Scholar (English Linguistics), IIU, Islamabad and Lecturer/Incharge Department of ELT and Linguistics University of the Punjab, Lahore. E-mail: maslam_pu64@yahoo.com

*** PhD Scholar (English Linguistics), NUML, Islamabad and Lecturer COMSATS Wah Campus WahCantt. E-mail: ayazqadeer@yahoo.com

Introduction

Nicholson (1979), after having examined various definitions of Sufism, remarks that the essence of most of the works shows that Sufism is 'indefinable'. However, modern scholars of Sufism have put their efforts in defining the term. Titus (1930) is of the view that Sufism is an attitude of mind and heart towards God and the struggles of life. Trimmingham (1971) defines mysticism as a specific approach to reality by exploiting intuitive and emotional spiritual faculties. These powers are generally inactive but they can be activated through training under guidance.

Critical Discourse analysis (CDA onwards) as a domain in applied linguistics emphasizes 'context' and an attempt may be done to contextually define Sufism by using CDA framework. Phillips and Hardy (2002) are of the opinion that discourse cannot be stripped off its broader context. Meyer (2001) too, states that CDA is concerned with context. This aspect is obvious through social, psychological, political, and ideological features of the context in which the texts are embedded and surfaced through inter-disciplinarity and inter-textuality. Titscheret al (2000) remark that inter-disciplinarity and inter-textuality are specific elements of CDA, which means that it is neither limited to one discipline nor defined by one text. The former refers to the fact that every discipline is a component of a series of disciplines while the latter refers to the viewpoint that every text is a component of a series of texts to which it reacts and refers, and which it modifies. The practitioners of the CDA, therefore, are aware of these contextualizing factors as they conduct their analyses.

Context acquires a special status in critical discourse studies. Van Dijk (2009) while elaborating the term 'context' relates that it is widely employed in academic and other genres of discourse, mainly in the abstract sense of environment or situation and related ideas. He further relates that in the language sciences, context is also employed as verbal context of some expression (word, sentence, etc.), that is, as co-text. In this study, context assumes greater significance in comprehending and further investigating the traces of the subjective stance and the ideological dimensions within Schimmel's analysis of Sufi poetry.

Discourse can never be isolated from its socio-cultural context. According to Phillips and Hardy (2002), the context, the location of individual texts in larger bodies of texts, are to be specified while analyzing a text by CDA.

It is remarkable here as Titscheret al (2000) state that CDA views language as a type of social practice. Just as no social practice is independent of others, language is also never a complete entity as it draws upon other social practices prevailing in the

society. Meyer (2001) is in favour of mediational association between language and society. On the basis of these statements, it can be remarked that language, as a matter of fact, determines society but at the same time is also determined by the social reality. Fairclough (2003) also approves that a dialectical association exists between a specific discourse and the social structure. However, Titscher et al (2000) suggest that language is analyzed through texts examining their elucidation, reception and social influences.

Jager (2001) adds that in CDA, the examination should identify that the norms, values, rights, laws, and other critical aspects of a discourse that the researcher exploits also have historical impact on discourse. Fairclough and Kress (as cited in Wodak, 2001) state that CDA stresses the social phenomena and structures encompassing the construction of texts. Individuals create meanings embedded in social processes and structures in their interaction with the text. Titscher et al (2000) state that discourses are intertextually connected to other discourses. Culture, history and ideology might act as the context of the discursive event.

With local cultural clues, intertextual references and ideological traces, this study may give considerable insights into the constructive power of Sufi poetic discourse and the socio-cultural context.

Fairclough, Wodak and Van Dijk differ in their approaches in looking at the relationship between language and society. According to Meyer (2001), Fairclough's model stands at one end while Wodak's and Van Dijk's approaches are on the other end. Titscher et al (2000) are of the opinion that Fairclough's model is appropriate for the investigation of the contexts of social and discursive change while Wodak's model seems appropriate for the examination of implicitly prejudiced utterances and decoding of allusions usually hidden in such expressions by referring to background knowledge. In the perspective of the current study, Fairclough's model seems to be the most suitable method of inquiry for the study.

Eagleton (1991), Larrain (1979), Thompson (1984), and Van Dijk (1998) have put forward their insights on the core issue of ideology in CDA. According to their perceptions ideological effects may be seen as causal impacts of texts which have been the center of great focus as per critical discourse perspective. They are further of the opinion that these effects of texts might be employed in inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies. Fairclough (2003) asserts that ideologies may also have durability and stability which transcend individual texts or bodies of texts in terms of various distinctions; they can be linked with discourses as representations, with genres as enactments and with styles as inculcations.

Focusing on the role of intertextuality in discourse construction and reception, Fairclough (1992a, 1992 b, 1995b), while giving more insight into intertextuality, thinks that it indicates how texts can transform prior texts and reorganize existing principles (genres, discourses) to produce new ones. In addition, he is of the view that CDA is interested in how texts are produced in relation to preceding texts and how texts help to constitute the existing principles in producing new texts. Fairclough (1995b) further asserts that intertextual analysis is an interpretative phenomenon, which heavily relies on the researcher's personal opinion and understanding.

Lemke (1995a, p. 86) while putting forward his stance on intertextuality asserts that by investigating intertextuality, the relationship between a particular text and a genre could be exposed, or, the link between a text and its cultural context could be comprehended to some extent. He further explains that it is through intertextuality that the text instantiates the context of culture. To him, intertextual investigation of meaning, therefore, is critical in exploring the meaning of a text. It acquires significance because all texts attain their meaning not only through intratextually but also intertextually. Intertextual relations, he remarks, rise above the context of situation and rely mainly on the context of culture. Intertextual references within this study acquire prominence as they help investigate subjective stance of Schimmel within her analysis of Sufi poetry.

Fairclough's text analysis for CDA takes its insights from the works of Halliday (1978, 1994). Fowler et al (1979) are of the view that SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) may be seen as a valuable resource and a major contributor for CDA. The same theme of contribution of SFL for CDA can be traced in the works of Hodge and Kress (1988, 1993); Kress (1985), Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001); Lemke (1995), & Thibault (1991).

Keeping in view, the insights from all the above theoretical perspective, the research questions of this study are:

1. What subjective stance, ideological clues and social representations may be witnessed in Schimmel's interpretive discourse on Sufi poetry?
2. How far do Schimmel's interpretations adequately reconstruct local culture from Sufi Poetry?

Method

Fairclough's three-dimensional model (Fairclough, 2003) was found to be the most appropriate model for this study. The analysis encompassed:

- Textual dimensions of the selected Sufi text
- Discursive practice/genres of Sufi poetry
- Social Dimension (social practice/ideologies).

According to Fairclough (2003), his three-dimensional model was further subcategorized into 'aspects of three dimensional model'. The analysis was made keeping into perspective the subcategories of the model. However, all the subcategories were not relevant for this study. The selected subcategories employed for the study comprised: social events; genre; intertextuality; assumptions; discourses; representation of social events; specific vocabulary and metaphor.

The following text was selected (see Appendix) from Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. The text was selected keeping the dimensions of the research questions into consideration. The references of the selected text are as under:

"The term shahid 'witness' is used for beautiful beloved..... ladder of created souls."

Mystical Dimensions of Islam (Schimmel, 2006, P.291-292, see Appendix)

Results

Social Events

The text under investigation was selected keeping the inherent rich cultural and mystic underpinnings into perspective. The researchers witnessed that cultural traces were brought into limelight by the writer to a considerable degree. As regards the 'chain of social events', the text also seems to be an integral part of the chain where Schimmel went deeper into the mystical and cultural dimensions elaborated in various chapters of *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Analytical tone was witnessed in every line and the text was found thoroughly descriptive in its approach. However, apparently it does not seem to belong to the 'chain or network of texts' as its connection could not be found with texts other than this particular work of Schimmel and it seemed to be an extension of the conceptual framework already established within various chapters of the book.

Genre

As regards the core issue of investigation of genre, the text under study establishes its deeper association with 'Sufi Discourse' which contains its own atypical tone. However, Schimmel's analytical faculties give it a tinge of descriptive and analytical essence. The researchers could not find any traces of evident 'genre mixing' within the Sufi discourse. The researchers also witnessed evident traces of critical examination of various poetic discourses of Persian, Turkish and Indo-Pakistan traditions through the interpretive mechanism of Schimmel.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality again seems to be a prominent aspect in the text under study extracted from *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Indirect quoting is again obvious. However, direct quotations were also traced but their frequency as compared to the indirect ones was found lower. Schimmel has skillfully merged the entire intertextual references giving a reasonable level of strength to the text.

Increased frequency of direct quotations was observed. The traditional and symbolic intertextual reference of *husn u-ishq* gives the text a unique dimension. The same theme has been the most striking issue in most of the poetic traditions; especially this theme has evolved a greater significance in Sindhi culture where many of the folktales revolve round this very theme. Besides, this particular theme was also employed by many story-tellers in the villages who used to grab the attention of listeners by adding more flavor to the stories. So, the prominence of this theme in local cultural settings is indeed remarkable. The researchers found that Schimmel seems to merge the theme skillfully within the text to give it more cultural strength. Another intertextual reference is that of a 'late Indo-Persian poet' whose name is deliberately not mentioned by Schimmel. However, his lines have been directly quoted which makes the cultural context more powerful. Another strong intertextual reference which has been directly quoted is that of a very famous *hadith* mostly employed by the poets while adoring their beloved: "God is beautiful and loves Beauty". The mention of this *hadith* may have different connotations but poets while admiring the physical beauty of their beloved often heavily rely on it.

Powerful intertextual references of the great masters of love Sufism, like Ahmad Ghazzali, Jalal-uddin Rumi and Fakhruddin Iraqi, who establish a greater historical significance, were also merged within the text. Mystical and cultural traditions borrow plenty of rich themes from their poetry. In literary settings, these leading figures are widely quoted and acclaimed. Thematic essence of their messages

is deeply embedded within their respective local cultural settings. The common folk not only relate them but follow the essence of their Sufi thought. Direct quotation from Baqli's book elaborating the universal theme of love and its rivalry forces from satanic and base insinuations adds strength to the text. Rivalry in love has been the most quoted aspect in the literary settings and contains greater cultural significance as the common folk develop a sound sense of this very term. The comprehension of this term by the common folk is mostly indebted to the folk poetic traditions which establish frequent mention of this very theme. The author here, while merging this particular powerful intertextual reference, makes the text more valid.

Powerful intertextual references of Mahmud of Ghazna, the warrior king of Afghanistan, and his slave Ayaz, the symbol of a complete surrender for his master, enrich the text with a considerable strength.

The glimpses of the same love and veneration may well be traced in the soil and culture of Sind. Reverence and complete surrender before the spiritual leader are the themes which are embedded within Sindhi local cultural settings. The disposition and mannerism of their common folk is indicative of this attitude. The reference of *Huma* bird also has intertextual perspectives as it has widely been quoted by most of the poets in Persian tradition as a good omen which brings kingdom.

It is pertinent to mention that superstitions also have a pivotal role to play in local cultural settings. The concepts of good and bad omen are deeply embedded in local cultural settings. Being a Western scholar, Schimmelseems to develop a sound sense of such cultural indicators. Intertextual reference of Majnun, the hero of the old Arabic tale and his love Laila have widely been quoted in many of the folk traditions establishing this love theme an integral part of Sufi and cultural settings. This story also gains greater acclaim within local cultural settings.

Another intertextual reference of Ruzbihan Baqli's conception of love of human beings as a ladder towards the love of Lord has often been quoted by most of the Sufi poets and thus becomes quite significant in many of the folktales which contain cultural underpinnings. The same theme of '*ishq-i majazi*' or 'metaphorical love' which has been the centre of a great attention in Persian tradition is another intertextual reference which was further strengthened by Jami's direct quotation. The significant aspect is the attribution of the references towards the persons of great stature to which they belong.

Despite the fact that the frequency of direct quotations in the text is greater than the indirect ones, authorial voice still seems to be more dominant as Schimmel has incorporated the entire intertextual references with the impact of her critical faculties. Her grasp over the entire state of affairs seems to be more effective.

Additive Relations

The text comprises as many as two examples of Additive Relations:

- a. "Beauty would be meaningless if there were no love to contemplate it-we may think, once more, of the concept of God as the hidden treasure . . ."
- b. ". . . he alludes to the classical Arabic saying that the metaphor is the bridge toward reality-hence human love is generally called, in the Persian tradition, *ishq-i majazi*, metaphorical love."

In the first instance 'the concept of God as the hidden treasure' mentioned in the second part of the sentence is an extension to the ideas of beauty and love. In the second example '*ishq-e-majazi*' is an extension of the theme of the metaphor which was considered as a connector and a bridge toward reality. The theme is an extension of Ruzbihan Baqli's concept of *ishq-e-majazias* a ladder towards *ishq-e-haqiqi*.

Relations of Elaboration

Following two instances of Relations of Elaboration were witnessed in the text:

- a. "Lover and beloved are unthinkable without each other-the lover's actions consist completely of *niyaz* "asking and petitioning' . . ."
- b. "Only Ayaz went into Mahmud's shade for here was his true kingdom: he is like the faithful, who does not seek glory and power . . ."

In the first instance, a clear relation of elaboration was witnessed where lover's state of affairs in the second clause is mere an elaboration of the strong ties between the lover and the beloved within the first clause. In example b, Ayaz's complete submission to Mahmud of Ghazna was witnessed and elaborated in the second clause where the reference to an incident within the folk tradition was just given a passing reference.

Epistemic Modalities

Epistemic modalities found in the text are as under:

- a. "The term *shahid*, "witness" is used for beautiful beloved."
- b. "The beloved is usually called an "idol" in Persian Poetry . . ."
- c. "The other model of mystical love is Majnun, the hero of the old Arabic tale . . ."

In examples 'a' and 'c' commitment to truth was witnessed which is quite normal. An unmodalized verb 'is' has been used. Modal adverb 'usually' employed in the second example makes the commitment towards truth more firm.

Following five Deontic modalities were noticed in the text.

- a. "To look at him, to adore him from a distance, may induce the Sufi to truly religious ecstasy . . ."
- b. "Wherever beauty is revealed, there out of necessity, love must grow."
- c. "Beauty would be meaningless if there were no love to contemplate it . . ."
- d. ". . . . we may think, once more, of the concept of God as the hidden treasure . . ."
- e. "Rumi compares it to the "wooden sword" that the hero gives his child so that the child may learn the technique of fighting."

In examples 'a', 'd' and 'e', 'may' has been employed as a modal verb while in example 'b' 'must' and in example 'c' 'would be' act as auxiliary verbs. However no modal adverb can be traced in all the examples. The author's commitment to obligation and necessity can be well identified in all the instances.

Value Assumptions

For the same term 'evaluation' is another word given in CDA. Value Assumptions found within the text are as under:

- a. ". . . many Persian and Urdu romances deal with the eternal story of *husn u- 'ishq* . . ."
- b. "Beauty, though basically a static concept, has no full meaning without admiration and love . . ."

Authorial voice was traced through the value judgment of the author. At the same time, her ideologies attached with the concept of *husn u-ishq* were also traced when Schimmel considers *husn u-ishq* as an eternal story. Again, in the second instance, by declaring beauty as a static concept through her value assumption, the reflection of author's beliefs was investigated. Schimmel's subjective stance is reflected through the value assumption she attaches with various concepts.

Specialized Vocabulary

The use of specialized vocabulary in the text is quite significant. 'truly religious ecstasy' employed by the author reflects Schimmel's subjectivity through which she conveys her message strongly. This truly religious ecstasy is an outcome of looking at the beautiful beloved. The essence of the very look at the beautiful beloved induces religious ecstasy. The shift from metaphorical love to the divine love becomes the subject matter of many of the Sufi poetic discourses. Another expression 'pedagogical experience' refers to the Sufi concepts which view this world as a pedagogical experience to be refined in the divine love. 'Intense spiritual passion' is another instance of specific employment of vocabulary which refers to the world where this sanctified passion sprouts and then gets deeply embedded in poetic discourse. It is important here that these words also have deeper impact on the local cultural settings.

Metaphors

Metaphors were noticed in the text in a good proportion. The metaphor of the 'spinning woman' has been employed for 'a sensual image of the divine'. 'The hidden treasure' was metaphorically employed for the concept of God. The connection between the 'love' and the 'wooden sword' is another instance of metaphorical representation. Further, the metaphor of 'paragon of beauty' has been exploited for 'Laila'. Another metaphor is that of *Niyaz* 'asking and petitioning' which is often employed for the lover who always keeps on asking and petitioning while the metaphor of *naz* 'coquetry' is exploited for the beloved. It is significant that not only these metaphors are representative of the style of the author but also contain plenty of local cultural underpinnings.

Exchanges, Speech Functions and Grammatical Mood

‘Knowledge exchange’ was witnessed in the text while ‘statement’ is the speech function employed within the text. As the text is mostly analytical and evaluative work, types of statement witnessed were mainly ‘statements of fact’ and ‘evaluation’. ‘Prediction’ and ‘hypothetical statement’ were nowhere seen as the nature of the discourse which is a Sufi discourse does not require ‘predictions’ and ‘hypothetical statements’. Interrogative and imperative impact is scanty as they are mainly employed in interactional and conversational discourse. ‘Grammatical mood’ throughout the texts was noticed as ‘declarative’ one.

Discourses

The discourses of beauty, love ‘*husn u ‘ishq*’ and their interdependence were elaborated within the text. Further, a reasonable ‘mixing of discourses’ of metaphorical love ‘*ishq i majazi*’, asking and petitioning ‘*niyaz*’ and coquetry ‘*naz*’ were also observed. Themes are connected with one another developing a reasonable poise in the text and their flow is quite natural.

Social Representation of Events

The text is marked with the social representation of the ‘eternal story of *husn u ‘ishq*’ encompassing the entire text. This very theme is the most discussed theme in many of the folk traditions and it has fascinated the common masses to a great deal. ‘The beauty of the Beloved’ has been socially represented supporting it with the Prophetic tradition: ‘God is beautiful and loves beauty’. Schimmel strengthened the text with authentic and powerful references wherever she deemed suitable. Sufi poets also seem to be captivated with the beauty of the Beloved. To them, the beloved referred to the divine Beloved. Again, this theme traveling through mystic and folk traditions becomes an integral part of the local cultural settings.

The next social representation is that of ‘worldly love as a pedagogical experience’. This theme has a religious connotation as well and was further employed by the Sufi poets who consider this world as a testing ground for the life hereafter. ‘Heart is polished by the fire of love’ to make it purified and sanctified for the divine Beloved. This theme is the extension of the previous theme. Social representation of the theme of *Niyaz* ‘asking and petitioning’ which is an attribute of the lover and Perfect *naz* ‘coquetry’ often employed by the beloved is another distinctive aspect of the text under study.

The social representation of 'Beauty, a static concept' which has 'no full meaning without admiration and love' is also the extension of the concept of beauty, love, lover and beloved.

Another Social representation which gives the text greater strength is that of 'historical facts to point out eternal truth'. Social representation of the story of Mahmud and Ayaz is the instance of the historical fact elucidating the eternal truth. This historical and cultural reference has a considerable cultural value where the obedience of the slave Ayaz to his master Mahmud of Ghazna was seen as an exemplary one. This historical reference is widely quoted and is embedded within Sufi discourse which also centers on the concept of submission and obedience.

Another significant social representation is that of 'model of mystical love Majnun for his love with Laila'. A bulk of cultural underpinnings is attached with the folktale of 'Laila and Majnun' as it is very close to the common masses, therefore, develops significant impact on local culture. '*Ishq-i-majazi and Ishq-i-haqiqi*' are socially represented which are further strengthened by RuzbihanBaqli's words: 'The love of a human being is the ladder toward the love of the Merciful' where metaphorical love finds its way towards the real love. Again, this theme is very popular amongst the Sufis who are convinced of the truth of the same theme.

The most prominent social representations are those of *Husn-u ishq*, the story of Mahmud and Ayaz, Laila and Majnun, *Ishq-i-majazi* and *ishq-i-haqiqi* found with detailed enquiry while all other minor themes were merged within these major social representations. Abstract social representation characterizes all the references.

Following Participants were witnessed within the social representation:

God, Beautiful Beloved, divine beauty, love, Persian, Turkish and Urdu romances, idol, Ahmad Ghazzali, Jalaluddi Rumi, Fakhruddin Iraqi, soul, Baqli, child, Mahmud, Ayaz, Poets of Iran, king, Huma bird, beloved Lord, Majnun, Laila, Persian poetry and Jami

All the Participants are reflective of the Sufi, local cultural, historical and ideological perspectives and are significant within their particular context.

Following Processes of various types were merged within the entire text under study: adore, induce, contemplate, grow, deal, hide, want, reveal, think, regard, obey, consist of, become, educate, command, lie, exist, pass, convey, seek, interpret, allude, behold, call, sum up, contract, ascend etc.

All the ‘forms of activity’ associated with these Processes were extracted from their particular contexts rich in cultural and ideological perspectives.

Prominent Circumstances mentioned within the text under study are as under: as the hidden treasure, as a pedagogical experience, from the satanic and base insinuations, in a wonderful transformation

The Circumstances were encoded as adverbials adding more meanings to various ‘forms of activity’ already merged within the text. They, along with the Processes, contained deeper cultural and ideological underpinnings.

Discussion

Addressing the question pertaining to adequacy involves ‘validity’ and insights from other works to conduct a comparative analysis. But the constraint the researchers encountered in this connection pertains to the fact that no other linguistic study can be found especially with a critical discourse perspective on Schimmel’s works to be employed as a comparative work tracing adequacy. What is available on Schimmel’s works is mere a general review of her books. So, the subjectivity of the researchers was definitely involved in investigating the issue of adequacy.

To answer this enquiry, only one linguistic device or aspect of Fairclough’s three-dimensional model cannot be relied on. Through insights from intertextuality, use of specific vocabulary, additive relations and relations of elaboration, it can be concluded how far Schimmel’s interpretations adequately reconstruct local culture from Sufi poetry.

In terms of intertextuality, the frequency of the indirect quotations in the text is greater than that of the direct ones. The indirect reporting of the references is indicative of the prominence of the authorial voice as Schimmel seems to maneuver these intertextual references with the impact of her own subjectivity. It is also pertinent to mention that despite being a Western scholar, her grasp over the minutest details of local cultural aspects is significant. Though, she was alienated to the minutest cultural norms, yet she had not only developed a fair understanding of the Sufi themes but also developed a reasonably sound sense of the poetic styles, variations and local cultural traditions.

Schimmel merges other voices referring to various local cultural references within the text establishing prominence but her own voice still remains distinct because of various faculties involved. The specific vocabulary which characterizes her style is one of the tools through which she creates distinction.

The matter of adequacy was also evaluated by investigating diverse local cultural aspects given prominence and their reconstruction within the text.

Conclusion

After having investigated the selected text, the researchers concluded that Schimmel, though, was a Western scholar, she was able to develop a reasonably sound sense of various local cultural indicators and her interpretations based on Sufi poetry were indicative of a reasonably adequate reconstruction of local culture. However, in responding to question pertaining to adequacy, the researchers' subjectivity was involved to a great extent as they could not find any comparative work on Schimmel. Through intertextual references indirectly quoted, Schimmel was capable of maneuvering the local cultural references with her own impact on them.

Further, with the employment of specific vocabulary, additive relations and relations of elaborations, she was able to portray those local cultural indicators adequately within her interpretive discourse which represented the local cultural values in practice. However, the researchers also traced some of the local cultural aspects within Schimmel's analysis which require more accuracy in terms of their elaboration.

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