

The Language of Confinement in the Expression of Psychoanalytical Suffering of Jane in *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Alishba	Undergraduate Student, Department of English, Government Postgraduate College for Women, Haripur Email: alishbaahsan001@gmail.com
Sidra Irshad	Assistant Professor, Government Postgraduate College for Women, Haripur Email: sidra.irshad84@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author:

Alishba
Email: alishbaahsan001@gmail.com

Abstract: *Language serves as a powerful reflection of societal values, shedding light on unique perspectives of behaviour and interactions. A psychoanalytical analysis of Jane's Psychological condition in "The Yellow Wallpaper" delves into her thoughts, behaviour and emotions, unveiling insights into her mental suffering. Examining the influence of societal and cultural factors on Jane's depiction of psychological distress, this work reveals how language conveys her confinement's impact on her mental state. Qualitative methodology is used in this research. Sociocultural theory is adopted as theoretical framework The findings suggests language serves as a mirror to Jane's psychoanalytical sufferings, depicting her deteriorating mental state through disjointed and obsessive thoughts in her diary entries. The linguistic portrayal underscores her confinement within the domestic space through repetitive descriptions of the wallpaper. Societal norms reinforce gender roles, confining women like Jane to domestic spheres and denying them autonomy, exemplified by her husband's patriarchal authority. This oppression exacerbates Jane's isolation and powerlessness, leading to her descent into madness. Major findings highlight the detrimental effects of patriarchal oppression on women's mental health, the significance of autonomy in maintaining sanity and the role of societal expectations in shaping individual identity and experience.*

Introduction

Language and culture play vital role in shaping cognitive and psychological development, influencing how individuals perceive, interpret, and engage with the world (Piller, 2021). Language, as a key element of personal and collective identity, shapes how emotions are expressed and understood (Tomasello, 2020; Chiao & Gendron, 2022). Different languages have unique ways of describing emotions, which can influence how people experience and manage their feelings (Chung, 2023; Mesquita et al., 2023). The term "language of confinement" refers to the specific use of words, phrases, symbols, and narrative techniques that convey themes of restriction, imprisonment, and limitation (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024). This type of language can describe both physical and psychological states of being trapped or constrained and is often used in literature to depict characters' experiences of entrapment and their struggles to escape.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory stresses the importance of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development. It suggests that learning and growth are driven by interactions with others, especially those who are more knowledgeable (Vygotsky, 2021; Kozulin et al., 2022).

Vygotsky highlighted the role of language and cultural tools as mediators between individuals and their environments, aiding learning and promoting higher mental functions.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* tells the story of a woman's descent into madness. The narrator, suffering from postpartum depression, is confined to a room with yellow wallpaper by her physician husband, John. As she becomes increasingly obsessed with the wallpaper, she starts to see a trapped woman within its pattern. Despite her pleas for freedom and autonomy, John dismisses her concerns, worsening her mental state. Eventually, the narrator identifies completely with the woman in the wallpaper and tears it down in a desperate act of liberation, ultimately succumbing to madness. This story is a poignant critique of the societal constraints on women's autonomy and the damaging effects of patriarchal oppression on mental health (Sundén, 2023; West, 2022).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory shows how social interaction and culture influence cognitive development. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the protagonist's confinement symbolizes the isolation and lack of control experienced in oppressive societies (Green, 2023). Her interactions with her husband reveal power dynamics, and her mental deterioration is shaped by societal norms. The story illustrates how societal factors, including language and power, affect mental health, aligning with Vygotsky's theory.

Research Questions

1. What role does language play in reflecting the psychoanalytical sufferings of Jane in *The Yellow Wallpaper* using sociocultural theory?
2. How does language convey Jane's confinement and its impact on her mental health in *The Yellow Wallpaper*?
3. What societal norms contribute to the oppression of women in the story?

Research Objectives

1. Analyze the role of language in reflecting the psychoanalytical sufferings of Jane in *The Yellow Wallpaper* using sociocultural theory.
2. Explore how language conveys Jane's confinement and its impact on her mental health in *The Yellow Wallpaper*.
3. Identify the societal norms that contribute to the oppression of women in the story.

Statement of the Problem

Sociocultural theory unveils how social and cultural forces shape characters' conduct in story *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, notably highlighting the oppression and marginalization of women in a patriarchal setting. Through narrative language, the story vividly portrays how societal norms and expectations erode women's autonomy and mental health, posing a substantial challenge to entrenched gender hierarchies and power structures.

Literature Review

The intersection of language, culture, and identity plays a pivotal role in understanding the psychoanalytical suffering of Jane in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Sociocultural theory provides a valuable lens for examining how language reflects Jane's confinement and its impact on her mental health. Research highlights language's role in expressing emotional distress and negotiating societal norms (Flusty, 2004; Beck, 2004). Jane's narrative voice, stifled by patriarchal expectations, exemplifies the tension between individual agency and cultural constraints.

Studies show language patterns can mirror mental health deterioration (Bibring, 1953). Jane's increasing fragmentation and obsession illustrate the destructive consequences of patriarchal control. The significance of language in conveying confinement's psychological effects is well-documented. Jane's language patterns, characterized by repetition, ambiguity, and silence, reflect her growing desperation.

Chesler (1972) depicts the societal norms contributing to women's oppression include patriarchal dominance, gender roles, and isolation. *The Yellow Wallpaper* serves as a powerful critique of patriarchal oppression, highlighting language's role in reflecting and resisting societal constraints. Research has consistently shown the damaging effects of patriarchal control on

women's mental health. *The Yellow Wallpaper* exemplifies the consequences of confinement, isolation, and patriarchal dominance.

Sociocultural theory provides a framework for analyzing the interplay between language, culture, and identity (Flusty, 2004). Psychoanalytic theory offers insights into Jane's mental health deterioration, highlighting the role of repression and denial (Freud, 1923). Feminist theory underscores the importance of challenging patriarchal norms and promoting women's agency (Cixous, 1976). These theoretical perspectives inform this study's analysis of Jane's experiences.

A qualitative, discourse analysis approach will be employed to examine Jane's narrative voice, language patterns, and societal context. A sociocultural theoretical framework guides the analysis, focusing on the intersections between language, culture, and identity. Specifically, this study will conduct a close reading of *The Yellow Wallpaper* to identify language patterns and narrative structures, analyze Jane's narrative voice, explore tensions between individual agency and cultural constraints, examine societal norms contributing to women's oppression, and draw on sociocultural, psychoanalytic, and feminist theories to interpret findings.

By integrating discourse analysis with sociocultural theory, this study provides a nuanced understanding of Jane's psychoanalytical suffering, confinement, and the societal norms contributing to her oppression. The findings will shed light on the intersections between language, culture, and identity, informing our understanding of psychoanalytical suffering in confined environments.

Gilman's work serves as a powerful commentary on the societal norms contributing to women's oppression during the late 19th century. *The Yellow Wallpaper* remains a significant work in feminist literature, highlighting the damaging effects of patriarchal control on women's mental health. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of research, providing insights into the complex relationships between language, culture, and identity.

The study's findings will have implications for understanding the impact of societal norms on individual mental health. By examining the intersections between language, culture, and identity, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of psychoanalytical suffering in confined environments. Ultimately, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Jane's experiences, shedding light on the complex relationships between language, culture, and identity.

Methodology

This qualitative study employs Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to analyze *The Yellow Wallpaper*, examining the relationship between social interactions and cognitive development as they pertain to the protagonist, Jane. The study conducts a close reading of the story, contextualizing Jane's experiences within the late 19th-century sociocultural backdrop

1. Character Selection

In this work the protagonist, Jane, and her husband, John, are selected from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, who will be representing different societal roles and power dynamics.

2. Text Analysis

Analyze Jane's language, narrative voice, and interactions with John to identify:

- Language patterns reflecting confinement and psychoanalytical suffering
- Power dynamics and social interactions shaping Jane's reality
- Cultural and historical context influencing Jane's experiences

3. Identification of Conflict and Oppression

Identify scenes where Jane's confinement and oppression lead to conflict, including:

- Internal conflicts (Jane's thoughts and emotions)
- Interpersonal conflicts (Jane and John's interactions)
- Societal conflicts (patriarchal norms and expectations)

4. Comparative Analysis

Compare Jane's experiences with:

- Other female characters in the text (e.g., Jennie)
- Historical and cultural contexts of the late 19th century

- Contemporary understandings of mental health and confinement

5. Theoretical Framework

Apply Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to analyze:

- Language and thought relationships
- Social interaction and mediation
- Zone of proximal development and cognitive deterioration
- Cultural and historical context shaping cognitive development

6. Synthesis and Interpretation

Interpret findings to demonstrate how:

- Language reflects and reinforces confinement and psychoanalytical suffering
- Societal norms and power dynamics shape individual experiences
- *The Yellow Wallpaper* critiques patriarchal attitudes toward women's mental health

7. Data Collection

- Primary data source: *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- Secondary data sources: Literary criticism, historical context, and sociocultural theory texts

8. Data Analysis

- Qualitative content analysis
- Thematic analysis

9. Significance

This study contributes to understanding the language of confinement and psychoanalytical suffering in literature, shedding light on the societal factors influencing mental health.

Discussion

The Yellow Wallpaper exemplifies Vygotsky's concept of social constructivism, where Jane's reality is constructed through her interactions with others, particularly her husband John. As a physician, John represents a more knowledgeable other, influencing Jane's understanding of her mental health. When Jane writes, "He takes all care from me, and so I have nothing to do but lie and think" (Gilman, 15), it illustrates how John's expertise shapes Jane's self-perception.

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is evident in Jane's cognitive deterioration. As John restricts her activities, Jane's access to psychological tools, such as writing, is limited. However, Jane appropriates writing as a means of resistance, exemplifying Vygotsky's concept of appropriation. When Jane writes, "I must find a way to get out of this" (Gilman, 40), it demonstrates her attempt to reclaim agency.

The intersubjective nature of knowledge construction is evident in Jane's interactions with John. Their conversations reflect the power dynamics of their relationship, with John's patronizing tone influencing Jane's thoughts. For instance, when John says, "You are gaining flesh and color and your appetite is better" (Gilman, 12), Jane's response is shaped by his assessment.

The cultural context of *The Yellow Wallpaper* highlights the historical significance of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Gilman's text critiques the patriarchal norms dominating societal attitudes toward women's mental health during the late 19th century. When Jane writes, "I've got to get out, or I shall go stark, raving mad" (Gilman, 35), it illustrates the destructive consequences of these norms.

Vygotsky's concept of language and thought is evident in Jane's growing obsession with the wallpaper. Her language becomes disjointed, reflecting her disintegration: "The color is hideous, and the pattern is torturing" (Gilman, 20). This language illustrates how Jane's thoughts are shaped by her social environment and cultural context.

The Yellow Wallpaper demonstrates how sociocultural factors influence cognitive development. Jane's confinement and lack of autonomy restrict her access to psychological tools, hindering her cognitive growth. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the significance of social interaction and cultural context in shaping cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Gilman's text illustrates the importance of considering the sociocultural context in understanding mental health. Jane's experiences reflect the societal attitudes toward women's

mental health during the late 19th century. When John dismisses Jane's concerns, saying, "You are not sick" (Gilman, 10), it exemplifies the medicalization of women's emotions.

Vygotsky's concept of mediation is evident in John's control over Jane's treatment. As a physician, John represents a mediator of Jane's reality, influencing her understanding of her mental health. When Jane writes, "He takes all care from me" (Gilman, 15), it illustrates how John's expertise shapes Jane's self-perception.

The Yellow Wallpaper highlights the significance of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in understanding the complex dynamics of cognitive development. Gilman's text critiques the societal norms constructing women's realities, illustrating the importance of considering the sociocultural context in understanding mental health.

Findings

This study explored the language of confinement in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, shedding light on the psychoanalytical sufferings of the protagonist, Jane. Through a sociocultural lens, the findings revealed that language plays a pivotal role in reflecting Jane's inner turmoil, conveying her confinement, and highlighting societal norms that perpetuate oppression. Language serves as a medium for Jane to articulate her subconscious struggles, and its fragmentation mirrors her mental deterioration. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underscores the influence of social interaction and cultural context on Jane's language, illustrating the tension between individual agency and societal constraints. The narrative structure and descriptive passages effectively convey Jane's confinement, exacerbated by her husband's dismissive language and societal expectations of domesticity. Ultimately, the study demonstrates how entrenched societal norms curtail women's autonomy, perpetuate gender disparities, and contribute to their subjugation within patriarchal structures. The findings answer the research questions, revealing that language reflects Jane's psychoanalytical sufferings, conveys her confinement, and underscores the oppressive societal norms that contribute to her mental distress, highlighting the interplay between individual psychology and social context in shaping experiences of mental illness.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* uses language to reflect the protagonist Jane's psychological distress, which is shaped by patriarchal societal norms. Through a psychoanalytic lens, the fragmentation of Jane's language not only reveals her deteriorating mental state but also illustrates her societal confinement, exacerbated by her husband's dismissive attitudes. Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underscores the role of social context in shaping language and identity, highlighting how gendered societal expectations restrict women's autonomy and contribute to their mental distress.

In addition to its historical significance, the study has contemporary relevance, urging a reevaluation of modern mental health care practices, particularly regarding patient autonomy, mental health stigma, and gendered expectations. It calls for a more inclusive and empathetic approach to mental health care that empowers individuals, especially women, to reclaim agency in their healing. Ultimately, *The Yellow Wallpaper* critiques 19th-century medical and societal structures, offering valuable insights for contemporary discussions on gender, mental health, and societal expectations.

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