

Motivation and Influence of Mother in Donoghue's Room

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Abstract:

The main aim of this research is to shed light on the positive role that mothers can have in their children' lives with specific reference to Emma Donoghue's *Room*. This novel is chosen because it includes many themes which demonstrate the relationship between the mother and her son, and how the son is influenced by his mother. This research hypothesises that the mother motivates her son, as most sons are influenced by their mothers, and the mother controls the behaviour of the child, since most children imitate and follow their parents. This is achieved by utilising Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in terms of text analysis, processing analysis and social analysis. The result of this study is that a child influences his mother in a positive way, and that a mother has a major influence on a child's behaviour and life, while the child also imitates his mother's speech and movements. This makes a mother more attention to her behaviour in front of the child.

Keywords: motivation, mother, *Room*, son, positive role.

حافز وتأثير الأم في رواية الغرفة لدونوغو
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الملخص:

الهدف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو تسليط الضوء على الدور الإيجابي الذي يمكن أن تلعبه الأمهات في حياة أطفالهن مع الإشارة بشكل خاص إلى رواية "الغرفة" للكاتبة إيما دونوغو. تم اختيار هذه الرواية لأنها تتضمن العديد من الموضوعات التي توضح العلاقة بين الأم وابنها، وكيف يتأثر الابن بأمه. يفترض هذا البحث أن الأم تحفز ابنها، حيث يتأثر معظم الأبناء بأمهاتهم، وتتحكم الأم في سلوك الطفل، لأن معظم الأطفال يقلدون ويتبعون والديهم. ويتم تحقيق ذلك من خلال استخدام تحليل الخطاب النقدي لفيركلو من حيث تحليل النصوص وتحليل المعالجة والتحليل الاجتماعي. أما بالنسبة لنتيجة هذه الدراسة، توصلت الدراسة الى أن الطفل يؤثر على والدته بطريقة إيجابية، وأن الأم لها تأثير كبير على سلوك الطفل وحياته، بينما يقلد الطفل أيضاً كلام والدته وحركاتها، وهذا يجعل الأم أكثر اهتماماً بسلوكها أمام الطفل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحافز، الأم، الغرفة، الابن، الدور الإيجابي.

1. Introduction

This research focuses on the positive influence of the mother, Ma, on her son, Jack, who is trapped in a small room with his mother. In Donoghue's *Room*, Ma plays several different motherly roles. The current research concentrates specifically on themes which can be considered as celebrating fortitude and the unbreakable tie between a mother and child. Thus, the current study aims to highlight Ma's significant contributions to Jack's upbringing, maintenance, and management. To examine the data and address the research questions, a descriptive qualitative approach was used. Kahlil Gibran emphasised how a mother is everything in her child's life; she provides comfort through difficult times, hope during dark times, and strength during times of weakness (Lewis, 2002: 16; Gregg, 2007: 139). Therefore, the mother is the first source of inspiration and force that shapes the child identity. For instance, she may use encouraging words to prevent certain negative behaviours.

Hence, this research paper explores the relationship between the mother and her son, the influence of the mother on her son, the mother's motivation of her son, and the son's imitation of his mother. The first section of this study comprises a synopsis of the novel which outlines the main events of the *Room*. In terms of the influence of mother on son, it can be seen at the beginning of the novel that the mother was keen to take care of him. She urged him to exercise, and she kept the outside world behind the room door. She maintained him physically and mentally by encouraging him to exercise and teaching him reading and writing.

The second and third sections explore how the mother is always by her son's side and has a direct impact on him. The influence of the mother on her son will also be further examined, including how the mother motivates her child. This shows how the mother begins to motivate her son, Jack, to escape from this room, expressing to him what the world outside of the room is like. The mother told him that the world was much bigger and wider than what they can see, and that beyond the wall was life and a vast world of animals and plants, but Jack thought these were just stories that his Ma had told him. When he watched television and realised that it depicted a real world, not a space population, Jack had a hysterical reaction because he believed that his mother told him about life, only the room was true (Donoghue, 2010: 59).

Finally, the fourth section explores at how Jack imitates his mother. The strong communication between a mother and child is one of the most important elements on which the healthy development of a child is based. It is a protection against many negative behaviours. Jack always imitates his mother's movement and speech. Jack feels that Ma cannot possibly have lied; however, it soon become clear to Jack that she is telling the truth, and he expresses belief in the matter, when she informs him that what he saw from the leaves of the trees was above the upper opening of the ceiling (Ibid:10). She tells him that, outside, there are many trees, and that their leaves change with the seasons, and he is affected by this statement.

Regarding the methodology used in this research, Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis has been implemented to examine the novel. Fairclough's approach of analysis incorporates text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation), and social analysis (explanation). A careful examination of the plot has been carried out with reference to the presentation of themes. Conclusions regarding the themes of the novel are presented following a thorough analysis of character and action.

2. Room: Relationship between Mother and Son

Room is divided into five chapters: presents, unlying, dying, after, and living. Ma, the mother, enters this room when she is just nineteen years old after she was kidnapped by a man named Old Nick, the jailer, who raped her and kept her prisoner. She is on the verge of insanity during her initial confinement in the room because she is unable to leave. The room was built by Old Nick as a soundproof jail with a fence concealed on either side. Ma makes numerous attempts to flee, but she is always unsuccessful. The events of the novel begin in this small room which includes a bed, kitchen, bathroom and television. Jack is a little boy who lives in this room with his mother. This room represented the world for them, and he believed that there was nothing behind the room's door but empty space. Cannon and Herbert have argued that Jack believed that the world existed only on television and there was nothing else in this world (Cannon and Herbert, 2011: 66). His mother assures him that no one else exists other than Nick and herself, and that Nick only comes at night to give food while Jack is asleep. According to Donoghue, Jack did not know at the time that Nick was his real father, and that his mother had been kidnapped. She hid the truth that Nick had kidnapped her, placed her in this room seven years previously, and had continuously raped her throughout this time (Donoghue, 2015: 46-47). This means that Jack was the result of this repeated rape; however, his mother was keen to protect him, and look after for him well. She urges him to do some exercise and hid the truth of the outside world that existed beyond the room door.

Ma starts to consider escaping once Jack turns five years of age. It is revealed in the novel that Ma had recently learned that Nick had been out of work for six months and was at risk of losing the house due to foreclosure (Donoghue, 2010: 72). Ma was concerned about what would happen to them when the mortgagee arrived to take back possession of the house. She felt that Nick would likely kill them to get rid of the evidence, and would not put himself at risk of releasing them, so she started to think of a plan to get them out of the place as quickly as possible (Ibid: 105). She invents a story that Jack was very sick and needed to go to the doctor. She then claims that he is dead, and Nick learns that his body must be disposed of, so he rolls him up in a rug and removes him from the room. At this point, Jack escapes into the outside world (Ibid: 154). Although she faces difficulties in convincing Jack to escape, Ma develops a strategy to ensure that Jack is courageous enough to follow through with the plan. Ultimately, Ma urges and motivates Jack to escape which means that Ma plays a major and an effective role in convincing Jack to escape from the room.

After escaping, at first, Jack had experienced difficulty in dealing with those around him in the outside world, but knew that he had to save his mother. Cannon and Herbert explain that, by reporting their story to the police, Jack was able to guide the police to and release his mother (Cannon and Herbert, 2011: 38). The police arrested Nick and brought a set of charges against him, and checked Jack and his mother in a hospital. There, she was returned to her family, with her story circulating through various media outlets (Donoghue, 2010: 164). Thus, Jack and his mother found themselves surrounded by cameras everywhere, which made Jack continue to refuse to adapt to that world full of noise and intertwined relationships. Further, his mother becomes very frustrated after one of the television interviews and makes a failed suicide attempt. Ma has frequently become upset with the interviewer's questions as the interview progressed. Suddenly, Ma informs the interviewer that she has transformed into a housewife in the room. She is seen crying at the conclusion of the interview which has not been going well. Ma experiences a depressive episode the following day and wants to be by herself. She is hospitalised and leaves Jack alone with his grandmother.

After her recovery, Ma decides to live in a different place with her son; however, despite receiving love and affection, Jack has great difficulty in adjusting to this world and the people around him (Putris, 2018: 8). After a while, Jack finds that he cannot keep his mother only to himself, which makes him miss the room, and the time when they lived there; Ma was the world to him as he was to her. Ultimately, Jack has a desire to visit the room again, and his mother agreed to it (Donoghue, 2010: 320).

Subsequently, when Jack returns to the room again with his mother, he remembers all about it, but he is surprised to find that he feels no connection between himself and this space (Donoghue, 2015: 400-401). Therefore, he says goodbye to the room one last time and to all of the memories that it held, and greets the outside world (Ibid: 401). Later, Ma plays an effective role in helping Jack adapt to this new environment and the people he encounters. She empowers him so that he is able to express his point of view in a polite manner. Finally, all aspects of connection between the mother and her son can be seen in the child's actions; she encourages him and creates an appropriate environment for the development of his skills and ambitions in order to enhance his self-confidence.

3. The Influence of Son on his Mother

Men, whether young and old, can see how their own relationships with their mothers have affected, and how they deal with their partners, wives, and girlfriends (Lee, 2015: 2). The relationship of a child and its mother is considered as being central in the formation of its personality. A child begins with a biological relationship that binds him to his mother based, in essence, on the satisfaction of organic needs such as food, sleep and warmth. This relationship then develops a strong psychological bond that provides a child with love and affection. In the novel, the relationship between Jack and his mother is gentle and stable. The novel describes

how they take showers together, have fun together, and prepare food and eat together (Donoghue, 2010: 54).

Hence, this shows that children need a mother who embraces him/her with affection and love, respects his/her privacy, and fulfils with his/her needs according to the stage of his/her development. Respecting the rights of a child deepens his/her sense of reassurance and satisfaction. This can be seen in Donoghue's description of how Ma encourages Jack to brush his teeth, and when she covers her eyes and says, "Your teeth are so clean, they're dazzling me" (Donoghue, 2010: 7). Thus, the novel shows how it is very important for a mother to be a friend to her child, and to share their dreams and feelings, especially in the early stages of their life.

Locke (2002) points out how humans are born without innate. Thus, we can see in the novel that the mother is the educator and guide, and she is primarily responsible for her child's upbringing, direction and healthcare, psychologically and culturally. In the novel, Donoghue demonstrates Ma's influence on Jack in following her plan to make his feel hot to convince Old Nick that Jack is sick. Despite Jack's worries, he has confidence in his mother and carries out the plan successfully (Donoghue, 2010: 111). At this point, Ma is able to make Jack agree with what she is trying to do to escape from the room, because she wants him to live a real life amongst other people.

Accordingly, it can be seen that a mother is responsible for bringing her children up until they become adults ready to take their place in society, and to become themselves good fathers or mothers. As Jack begins to ask his mother questions about what he has seen, Ma starts teaching him and replying to his questions to help him understand the outside world. At first, according to Donoghue, Jack is completely ignorant of the outside world. For this reason, Ma starts to tell him that she has a home outside of this room, and she begins to feed him information so he can understand what is outside (Donoghue, 2010: 83). Further, Jack agreeing to his mother's plan to fool Old Nick into believing that Jack is sick shows that she influenced Jack's desire to escape from the room and experience the outside world. At this juncture, Jack has no idea that he and Ma are prisoners or that such a world exists outside of the room. For Jack, there is no past before being captured; there is only the present.

Johnson also emphasises a mother's impact on her children in terms of education; he confirms that, given how a mother's instruction should be more moral than intellectual. The mother must be in charge of the far more crucial aspect of education, which includes shaping children's habits and building the groundwork for their character (Johnson, 2011: 59). The child feels the presence of his/her mother from the first moments of his/her birth, as s/he smell her scent and recognise her. Every mother must know that all that her child experiences during the first months of his/her life have the greatest impact on them, as psychologists confirm that it is an optimal time for learning and growth. Donoghue describes how Ma teaches Jack everything until his birth when Jack says "You cutted the cord and I was free" I tell Ma "Then I turned into a boy" (Donoghue, 2010: 4). Hence, a mother realises the appropriate time when her child is in a state of complete response. Thus, the child

learns to speak because the mother speaks to him/her and teaches him/her how to think. She also gives him/her choices, alternatives and opportunities that enable him/her to think. Further, the child learns from his/her mother how to speak and play, and they sense whether she is angry or happy. Therefore, children should be left to familiarise themselves with the environment around them, and to realise the contrast of sounds by themselves. Furthermore, the mother must pay attention to the mental development of her child during the first six months of his/her life in order for him/her to gain different experiences. The mother must also speak to the child tenderly, while looking at them also helps the child detect the tone of his/her mother's voice, which is very important.

In addition to education, the influence of the son on his mother is likewise the psychological. This can be seen in the novel when Ma and Jack are playing together and collaborating in everything (Donoghue, 2010: 6). Ma engages Jack in numerous games in an effort to keep him entertained. She explains that they can still play while they are eating and the winner of their game receives as many kisses as they score, according to the regulations of the game (Donoghue, 2010: 6). Thus, this demonstrates that Ma is influencing Jack's love and attention in addition to simply following him to the playground. Ma motivates and thanks Jack because he has saved her; he carried out the plan, and they are now free (Ibid: 154). Thus, the best evidence of the strong influence for Jack was when she said, "Here's the precinct" (Ibid) which means that she trusts him.

4. Mother's Motivation to Her Son

When a child first starts to be influenced by motives other than the use of his/her own senses, it can be argued that parts of his/her character are beginning to emerge on his/her own. In the novel, there are many forms of a mother motivating her son instances. The first is persuasion and it can be seen when Jack first refuses to follow the plan of escape and tells his Ma that he is only five years old. However, Ma persuades him to agree to escape from the room (Donoghue, 2010: 109).

Secondly, another aspect of motivation in *Room* is the mother's encouragement and support of her son, and this can be seen when Ma motivates her son to realise that there is a world outside of the room. She also encourages Jack to understand the idea of the outside world and how things he saw on television were mostly true. Although Jack is only five years old, she encourages him to read, write and understand what he sees on television, and she teaches him to do exercises every morning. As a growing child, Jack learns about the world around him, and starts to be curious about everything that surrounds him, seeking to learn about what he does not know or what his senses or perceptions pick up. Goodrich, however, has pointed out how it is much more likely for a mother's wise advice to be heeded when she gives advice in a respectful manner, and when she encourages her children to follow a good path (Goodrich, 1835: 28). In fact, Ma insightfully chooses *The Runaway Bunny* to read to Jack. The book tells about how the mother bunny holds the baby bunny and says, "Have a carrot" (Donoghue, 2010: 18). Jack's mother obviously motivates him to read or listen to the story and encourages him to eat all at one go.

Additionally, Johnson explains that, both favourably and adversely, a boy's mother has a significant impact on how he views himself as a man (Johnson, 2011: 61). The mother's words and attitudes have the power to sever the tenuous link between childhood and manhood. Johnson says that a boy's perception of himself as a man is greatly influenced by his mother (Ibid: 61). Thus, the mother is the first inspirer in the development of the child's self, through what she says to him/her. It may be her encouraging words that help a child quit a certain negative behaviour. This can be seen when Ma told Jack for being smart and understanding despite being only five years old. This is how she introduced the outside world to Jack.

In addition, the mothers motivate their children psychologically and physically. The physical and psychological aspects of the mothers affect the upbringing of children. This includes feeding them, taking care of their health and clothes, offering them love and tenderness and making them feel safe and happy. The mothers also support the physical, mental and psychological development of her child, and contributes to his/her integration into family and society, as well as forming of their personalities. At this point, some mothers may decide to place such responsibility on a teacher and the school in general. Certainly, there are aspects of the child's development that do not only occur within the family, or in the vicinity of the mother or both parents, but also by the interaction with education providers. Thus, we find the mother conscious of the stages of growth and the nature of physical and psychological changes in the child. Further, the formation of the child's personality throughout his/her stages of development can also require the help of the father, brothers and sisters, or even teachers and other staff members inside the child's kindergarten or school. The mother's personality, culture, and knowledge, will align with the formation of the child's personality. In the novel, Jack returned home, and perhaps the meaning of his return is that he becomes closer to his mother. The mother is supposed to teach her child self-reliance, fulfil personal needs (such as self-care) and issues such as the organisation and cleanliness of bedroom. A mother must realise that excessive over-protection of her child can harm his/her personality more than it benefits them. In *Room*, we see how Ma inspires Jack to escape from this room (Donoghue, 2010: 108). Jack agrees to the plan to escape by nodding his head (Ibid: 109). Ma rehearses with him the escape plan when she says "Count on your fingers. Sick, Truck, Hospital, Police, Save Ma" (Ibid: 110). The mother must also encourage her child, at a later stage in his/her development, to make appropriate decisions, and the greater the responsibility that the mother places on her child, the more the child will be responsible in the future.

5. Son's Imitation of his Mother

Imitation is a complex skill whereby a child watches how an adult acts, and s/he absorbs and translates this into action and then implements it through his/her motor skills. Generally, children almost always imitate their parents or the surrounding environment. As parents, whether or not we actively use our influence, our children will certainly aspire to be like us. For example, if a parent leads a promiscuous life, their children are likely to follow their lead. Similarly, if a parent leads a moral life,

their children are more likely to do so as well (Johnson, 2011: 60). Therefore, a child needs a mother who showers him/her with affection and love, and who respects his/her privacy and keeps up with his/her needs, according to the stages of his/her development. Respecting the rights of the child deepens their sense of reassurance and satisfaction. Thus, it is very important for a mother to be a friend to her child, and to share his/her dreams and feelings, especially in the early stages of their life.

To put it succinctly, the self-activity that imitation inspires is what gives it its true educational value. It requires the use of all mental faculties, ranging from the growth of willpower and practical ability to the acquisition of sense-knowledge. Deahl argues that the expediency or economy of imitation in education comes from the fact that the imitative method fully acknowledges everything the society has inherited from the past and builds upon this inheritance in developing the child's mind (Deahl, 1900: 98-99). In addition, imitation begins this development process by providing the child with a conscious and intelligent possession of the race's accomplishments in a more expedient and rational manner (Ibid.). The vanity and absurdity of expecting children to rediscover or invent things that their ancestors have already discovered or invented is exposed by the imitation method of learning (Ibid). Hence, this imitative method could speed up and facilitate learning by verifying, via imitation, what has already been accomplished (Ibid). The child will have an intelligent foundation, a body of knowledge that can be beneficial to future learning. The child will have more energy, and be free to seek and achieve original thought, innovation, and discovery, at an earlier stage through this method of verification (Ibid).

In *Room*, Jack copies his mother in terms of sport and exercise, domestic work, cleaning his teeth, helping with the preparation of food, and watering plants (Donoghue, 2010: 9). These actions have a clear effect on Jack and he considers them as tasks to be carried out as his mother's instructions (Donoghue, 2010: 10). Accordingly, everything the mother says is believed by the child to be true and truthful. In the beginning of the novel, Donoghue explains how Ma has told Jack that the world is limited to this room and that space is only the upper opening in the ceiling (Donoghue, 2010: 9). Children are influenced by everything around them; their minds retain what they observe during their day, and they constantly imitate the adult. Since children spend most of their time with their mother, they are greatly influenced by her, and believe and obey her. Therefore, the mother is primarily responsible for the happiness of her children and the formation of their personalities in a positive way, just as children see their mother as a friend to them because she is the one who shares their time and plays with them.

Another kind of imitation, Donoghue describes how Jack rehearses Ma's plan by saying "So this time plan is Dead, Truck, Run, Police, Save Ma. Say it?" (Donoghue, 2010: 125). At this point, Jack repeats his mother's speech and imitates her movements. The mother is the first model that the child sees as an example to imitate. When a child finds that his/her mother is quick-tempered and loses control of her confidence when she is not satisfied with a certain situation or behaviour, it is natural for the child to resort to the same method to express his/her resentment. Thus, it is

important that the mother does not expose negative feelings in front of her children and demonstrates positive feelings, because the mother helps children to learn how to control their feelings and urges them to cooperate positively at an early age. In the beginning of the novel, Jack says that he hates Ma because he feels that she hurts him. However, after Jack is convinced to carry out the plan to escape, he does what his mother says (Donoghue, 2010: 133).

In addition, another form of imitation evident in the novel occurs when Ma and Jack reach the outside world. In *Room*, Jack always imitates his mother's language, especially in the hospital and when he speaks with other people like Dr. Kendrick (Donoghue, 2010: 168-169). Ma starts explaining how there are many children outside of the hospital (Ibid: 178). Thus, it can be seen that a child can be described as a radar that captures everything that is going on around them. If the mother is honest, trustworthy, generous, courageous and chaste, her son will have good manners. In the novel, Donoghue describes how Jack and Ma like to try everything "so we know what we like" (Donoghue, 2010: 301). Jack says that he likes to go to the park and play football (Ibid.). He is pure, but unless he is directed in the right way, and unless he finds a good example and model in his mother, he will undoubtedly go astray.

6. Conclusion

There are several points that have been concluded from an analysis of the novel *Room* by Emma Donoghue. It has been found that there are three dominant roles of a mother which have been performed by Ma. These include the influence of Ma on Jack, motivations of the mother demonstrated by Ma to Jack, and the imitation of Jack to Ma. Ma as an influencer can be seen as the sole educator of Jack. With the limited space available, Ma teaches Jack to read, write and count when he was only five years old. Jack's literacy and numeracy skills are highly developed and have been quickly acquired for his age. On the other hand, the mother's motivation is another important element, and this motivation has an effect on his life and his behaviour, both individually and with others. Furthermore, Ma takes care of Jack's physical needs by cooking food well, and always telling him to wash his hands and brush his teeth. Ma tries to explain things to Jack in order to protect him from the shock and upon going to the outside world. Therefore, Ma encourages Jack to do things that he enjoys in order to help him adapt to his new surroundings. As a result, Jack starts to adjust, and his mother instantly becomes Jack's inspiration since she is his only companion. Therefore, Ma, is a companion, acts as a listener and explains things to Jack. The third important aspect is the child's imitation of his mother. Throughout the novel, Jack imitated his mother in many ways in both speech and movement. This imitative behaviour has a positive effect on Jack's character in terms of speaking and good manner on the one hand, and it helped him escape from the room on the other.

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