User Friendly Feminism: A Feminist Critique of Iron Jawed Angels

Kira S. Jones (Helene Shugart)
Department of Communication, University of Utah

This essay explores the contemporary film Iron Jawed Angels, which chronicles the final stages of the women's movement for suffrage. The film positions itself explicitly as a feminist text through the inclusion of feminist sensibilities and perspectives, which link themselves to common perceptions of female empowerment. Yet, close examination of how representations of feminism and women are constructed and often manipulated in other areas of the media illustrates the frequent construction of a toned down, non-threatening or appropriated version of feminist sensibilities. Therefore, this essay engages in a close textual analysis of such occurrences as they are seen in Iron Jawed Angels along with a deconstruction of the film's representations of gender oppression, female friendships, feminism, tokenism, as well as certain cinematic stylistic components. This essay illustrates the existence of subtle, yet recurring strategies that devalue feminism and align women with traditional acceptable female roles. Ultimately, the purpose of this essay is to encourage society to more accurately celebrate and represent the diversity of feminist thought.

The Influence of Previous Language Study on the Acquisition of a Second Foreign Language: A Study of Adult Learners of Russian

Kirk Jorgensen (Jane Hacking)
Department of Languages and Literature, University of Utah

This study investigates the influence of previous language study on the acquisition of socio-pragmatic competence in a second foreign language. The research focused on adult learners of Russian who, despite having spent a significant amount of time in Russia or another country in which Russian is spoken, still struggle with choosing socio-pragmatically appropriate linguistic forms for a given situation. An example of a socio-pragmatic mistake is failure to use the form of address consistent with the target norms, like the informal/formal registers. A questionnaire was administered to the participants, asking them to list previous languages studied. The participants also were given a pre-test, which targeted the socio-pragmatic speech act of refusal. The data from the pre-tests were rated by two native speakers, according to how natural the answers felt and how correct the word usage was. The results of the pre-test will be compared to the background questionnaire in order to establish the possible correlation between previous language experience and performance. A preliminary review of the data suggests that those students, who have had more (1-4 years) language experience (typically high school classes of Spanish, French, or German), scored higher on the pre-test than those who had less language learning exposure.