Culture, Gender, Language and Literature Relationship: 4th Year Elt Students' Perceptions of Female Issues in American and British Literature

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Abstract

In this paper; culture, gender, language and literature relationship is discussed from the sociolinguistics perspective. This complex relationship is analysed in relation with cognitive categories, Whorfian Hypothesis, grammatical markers, natural, grammatical and social gender and the notion of gendered language. Social gender is also examined within a literary lens through female issues raised by 4th year ELT students in analysing literary texts in 'Selections from Western Literature' as an elective course at an ELT department at a Turkish University. Five (5) thematic categories are gathered through inductive analysis of the presentation data as female issues which are namely; obedient and modest; beautiful, seductive or destructive; underappreciated and emotionally trapped woman; woman as an object of love and female writer expressing her love. Female issues are examined in relationship with social gender and drawing from the thematic categories; suggestions and implications regarding how to integrate literature, culture and gender relationship as a tool of teaching English in the ELT curriculum are discussed.

Keywords: culture, gender, gendered language, female issues

1. Culture and Language

Wardhaugh (1990: 211) states that *'the exact nature of the relationship between language and culture has fascinated, and continues to fascinate, people from a wide variety of backgrounds'.* Therefore, culture needs to be examined in order to find out and demonstrate the nature of the relationship. In this study, the term culture refers to 'socially acquired knowledge', 'functioning in a particular society, 'knowing how', 'being a member of a society', and a 'conceptual system of categorising the world around us and our experience of it' rather than the 'high culture' requiring only appreciation of music, literature and fine arts (Wardhaugh, 1990; Yule, 2010).

Language communities acquire this conceptual system of categories and taxonomies like syntactic and phonological units of vowels and consonants; nouns and verbs; statements and questions, such as; pronouns, countables, uncountables, plurals, and the concept of time such as the tenses, weekend and decade (Yule, 2010). The categories of colour, prototypes and even kinship terms vary in different cultures. The Dani of New Guinea name of two colours of 'black' and 'white'; Assam people in India have dozens of words for different types of baskets, rice, and ants, and Eskimos developed a set of expressions for snow (Yule, 2010). This complex relationship is acknowledged by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf in terms of how language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world, organise, classify, code and structure the data. They believe that the language determines cognitive categories, belief system and a way of thinking and hence phonological and morphological units and grammatical markers; for example, in Swahili there are three grammatical markers of humans, non-humans, artefacts; in Japanese the objects have grammatical markers depending on their shape: thin, flat and round; countables and uncountables are different in English and Turkish (i.e. bread and sugar are countables in Turkish).

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This linguistic determinism is named after them as 'The Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis' which puts forward the idea that different people speak differently because they think differently since their language offers them such ways of expressing the world around them (Wardhaugh, 1990; Kramsch, 1998; Yule, 2010). In this strong version of Whorf's hypothesis, as Kramsch (1998: 13) argues, language determines the way we think, which could easily lead to prejudice and racism; but, a weak version, supports that there are cultural differences in concepts and semantic associations which cannot be mutually translated into one another in terms of structural equivalences but on common conceptual systems based on larger contexts of experience (see also Wardhaugh, 1990; Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003).

2. Language and Gender

Language and gender relationship has come to the fore in sociolinguistics which can be examined in three levels of biological or natural gender which derives from a biological distinction between male and female. As Yule (2010: 84) describes, the agreement between *'Cathy'* and *'her'* in the sentence *'Cathy loves her mom'* can be identified as the natural gender agreement since 'she' and 'her' are reference words for female entities. Similarly; 'he' and 'his' signify male entities, when the natural gender is unknown or irrelevant 'it' and 'its' are used in English as the reference words.

However, secondly, grammatical gender is based on the type of noun (masculine of feminine) and it is not tied to biological gender. Nouns are classified according to their gender class and hence, articles and adjectives have different forms to 'agree with' the gender of the noun. German, for example, has three grammatical genders, masculine *der Mond* ('the moon'), feminine *die Sonne* ('the sun') and neutral *das Feuer* ('the fire') (Yule, 2010: 84).

Thirdly, kinship terms such as *uncle* or *grandmother* provide examples of social categories defined by social connections and roles. Address terms such as *Miss.* or *Mrs.* in English, include information about woman's social status either as daughter or wife, identifying she is married or not. A woman using *Ms.* as the address term is indicating that her social identification is not based on her marital status. However, male version of the address term *Mr.* does not include any information about marital status. This process can be an evidence of gendered culture categorising men and women into groups of the ones wearing blue (boys) and the others wearing pink (girls) as the simplest category or the ones who can vote or not as a complex distinction as women could not vote for such a long time (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003; Yule, 2010: 274).

Social gender also includes gendered language, for example as Yule (2010: 274) describes, in Sidamo, spoken in Ethiopia, there are words used only by men and some used only by women, so that the translation of 'milk' would be *ado* by a man, but *gurda*by a woman. In Japanese, men use *boku*and women *watashi*or *atashi*when referring to themselves as the translation of 'I'. Similarly, in Portuguese, saying 'thank you' is *obrigado* if you are a man and *obrigada* if you are a woman. Apart from these examples, there are gendered word pairs such as hero-heroine or actor-actress illustrating the different roles of woman and man through suffixing. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003: 484) state that one striking fact about the asymmetry between male and female terms in many languages is that when there are male/female pairs, the male form is unmarked and the female term is created by adding a bound morpheme or by compounding such as prince/princess, host/hostess and heir/heiress. They argue that other male/female gender pairs have meaning differences. Although a governor governs a state, a governess takes care of children, nor is a mistress a female master. It is possible to talk about 'unwed mothers' but not 'unwed fathers', of 'career women' but not 'career men' as historically and socially bachelors can father a child and men are supposed to have careers.

It is recently that some gendered words like 'firemen' and 'policemen' have become 'fire-fighters' and 'police officers' in order to avoid gendered use of the words. However, 'man', 'he' or 'his' can still be used as a means of reference when speaking generally instead of using both 'his' or 'her' or the plural form of 'their'. The *brotherhood of man* includes women, but *sisterhood* does not include men. In the same fashion, 'female judge', 'madam chairman', 'woman executive' and 'lady doctor' can be noticed in some discourses which suggest that higher status professions and positions are still associated with males. Moreover, unpleasant entities or events are associated with female characteristics such as 'black widow spider', 'hurricane Betsy' and 'Venus fly trap' (see Wardhaugh, 1990; Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003; Yule, 2010, Uluocak and Aslan, 2011). In terms of social variation, non-standard or lower-class speech (i.e. double negative use, omission of derivation) is associated with men because of strength, toughness and independence. On the other hand, women are more likely to use the higher-prestige forms since they tend to be more careful about how they are going to be judged in socialization with others (Wardhaugh, 1990; Yule, 2010).

In relation, studies conducted on gendered interaction indicate that women use more indirect speech and question forms, tag questions, rising and falling intonation, movement and gesture and use 'we' and 'you' more, share, discuss, and seek reassurance, use back-channels, (yeah?, really?, hmm, oh) adjectives (adorable, charming and lovely) more frequently as they are more careful in mutual interaction. Females also use larger variety of complex colours such as beige, aquamarine and lavender. Especially in interaction with other females, women prefer to talk about social life, books, food and drink, life's troubles and life styles, unlike men, who tend to interact in more hierarchical and assertive way and like to talk about business, politics, legal matters and sports (see Wardhaugh, 1990; Yule, 2010).

Wardhaugh (1990: 302) asks important rhetorical questions about the gendered language; such as if men and women speak differently, is it because of the structure of the particular language? Which would be a kind of confirmation of the Whorfian hypothesis (see section 1) regarding linguistic determinism, or, do these differences reflect the ways in which the sexes choose to deal with each other in the particular society? Is it because some particular languages like English, German and Arabic are more sexist as they have natural and grammatical gender (see section 2) components regarding both morphological (derivations) and syntactic units (pronouns, articles)? Is it the people who use languages who are or who are not sexist? So does that make Turkish males less sexist than the males who speak English since Turkish language has no gender distinctions? Drawing on these questions, the issue is not a linguistic one but a cultural one reflecting the fact that men and women have different interests, roles and responsibilities and hold different type of conversations and react differently. Regarding the social gender, men's and women's speech differs since boys and girls are brought up differently and they often fill different roles and responsibilities in society. For example, women prefer 'overt' prestige through being more careful about using standard language, unlike men who prefer 'covert' variety by using ungrammatical or vernacular version (Wardhaugh, 1990; Yule, 2010).

3. The Significance of the Study: Social-gender and Literature

As Kramsch (1998: 6-7) argues etiquette, expressions of politeness, social *dos* and *don'ts* shape people's behaviour through child rearing, behavioural upbringing, schooling and professional training. The use of written language is shaped and socialised through culture. The use of appropriate genres (i.e. the application form, the business letter, the political pamphlet) is shaped by culture. Common attitudes, beliefs, and values are reflected in the same linguistic code of *discourse communities* representing past, present and anticipating future. Consequently, language is not a culture-free code, distinct from the way people thinks and behaves, but, rather, it plays a big role in the understanding of culture, particularly in its printed form. Thus, literary texts are the authentic materials in examining sociolinguistic issues such as speech acts, politeness, discourse analysis, regional and social variation, and hence language, culture and gender relationship (Lazar, 1993; Yule, 2010). According to Kramsch (1998: 3) words reflect their authors' attitudes, beliefs, experience, their point of view and refer back to stock of knowledge therefore language expresses cultural reality. The way people use the language creates meanings that are understandable to the group they belong to through tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions. Hence, through all its verbal and non-verbal aspects, literary texts are tools for understanding the differences betweenlanguage varieties since they provide access to localdialects, accents or specific vocabulary (Lazar, 1993; Kramsch, 1998).In this respect, literature is a natural access to theculture (local or foreign) and gender relationship in the widest sense. So, the basic aim of the study is to examine female issues raised by ELT students in analysing literary texts in 'Selections from Western Literature' as an elective course through:

1- Understanding students' perceptions about the female issues through presentations involving female figures and issues.
2- Drawing suggestions and implications regarding how to integrate literature, culture and gender relationship as a tool of teaching English.(SPACE BELOW)
3- Drawing implications regarding the ELT Curriculum concerning literature, culture and gender relationship and awareness.

3.1. The Setting and the Participants

In the current ELT Curriculum, which was put into practice in 2006, there are two main literature related courses 'English Literature I, II' in the 2nd year and 'Literature and Language Teaching' I, II in the 3rd year.

'Selections from Western Literature' as an elective course is placed in the fall semester in the 4th. Year (YÖK, 2007). This course is taken by 53 (38 female+15 male) 4th. Year ELT students in the 2014-15 academic year at ÇanakkaleOnsekizMartUniversity in Turkey. In this course, brief history of British Literature, elements of literary texts (plot, theme, etc.), figures of speech with examples (metaphor, simile, hyperbole) are covered. After the analyses of literary texts as examples of literary genres (Edward Albee's 'Sandbox', Shakespeare's sonnets, Blake's 'The Tiger', Oscar Wilde's 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'), students delivered presentations in small groups (3 or 4 students) which constitutes 40 % of the final mark. Tutorials are given before the presentations and written and oral feedback is given after the presentations. Potential use of literary works in language teaching is discussed. Written reports are submitted at the end of the course which accounts for 60 % of the final mark (see also Yavuz, 2014).

The focus of this paper is on the presentations involving female figures/issues in order to understand students' perceptions about social-gender, culture and literature relationship. The special focus is put on these issues especially by the female students who constitute the majority of the groups (38/53 students). Besides, the researcher as a female lecturer raised the issues of social and gender equality, gendered speech and social gender in the content and the procedure of the particular course in terms of the particular literary periods and writing conventions. Student presentation check lists and students' written reports are used as a framework for the content analysis of the relevant issues. The specific data, regarding social-gender, culture and literature relationship is gathered through check lists and students' written reports containing the information about the period, the poet/writer, the theme/s, the point of view, the plot, the major characters, time and place, language use (figures of speech, discourse) and the potential classroom implications.

4. The Data Analysis: Thematic Categories

Students were free to choose either British or American literary pieces. Five (5) thematic categories are gathered from the presentations as female issues which are raised by the students. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 134) define, the *constant comparative method* requiring inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning is used while categorising and coding female issues. The categories are drawn from the presentations through *inductive coding* and *member check* (student feedback) in order to understand whether they are described accurately (see Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). These categories are namely:

1.   Obedient and modest woman
2.   Beautiful, seductive or destructive woman
3.   Underappreciated, emotionally trapped woman
4.   Woman as an object of love
5.   Female writer expressing her love

4.1. Obedient and Modest Woman

●   'The Pearl' (American short story) by John Steinbeck: Juana, the Indian wife, is obedient, strong, hard-working, serious, quiet and modest. She sees future that the 'pearl' is going to bring her family bad luck and wants to get rid of it (McMichael, 1985: 1792-1805).

●   'The Death of a Salesman' (American play) by Arthur Miller: Linda is Willy's loyal, kind, nice and giving wife. Even though Willy is often rude to her, she loves Willy. She has an unconditional love and she always supports her husband and her sons. Although she is aware of the failures of her husband and the sons, she keeps quite (McMichael, 1985).

●   'The Birthmark' (American short story) by Nathaniel Hawthorne: Georgiana has a red birthmark on the cheek symbolising evil. She is a beautiful, sensible, intelligent, devoted and obedient wife who is killed by her husband (Aylmer). Aylmer, as a devoted scientist, is obsessed with perfection and the idea of sin. He decides to remove the red birthmark on his wife's cheek (Georgiana) and gives her a liquid to erase the mark but when the devoted wife drinks the liquid rather reluctantly, she dies (McMichael, 1985: 525-588).

●   'The Black Cat' (American short story) by Edgar Allan Poe: The wife of the protagonist is a kind and nice woman who loves animals but is killed by the husband when she is trying to protect the cat from her husband's wrath (McMichael, 1985: 366-444). (SPACE BELOW)

4.2. Beautiful, Seductive or Destructive Woman

● 'Leda and the Swan' (British poem) by W. Butler Yeats: Leda as a beautiful, innocent, mythological figure was raped by Zeus and gave birth to Helen and consequently, resulted in the destruction of Troy (Kermode and Hollander, 1973: 1679-1735).

● 'To Helen' (American poem) by Edgar Allan Poe: Helen is a semi-god mythological figure of beauty and causes destruction of Troy as a result of her marriage with the prince of Troy, Paris when she is already married with Menelaus, the king of Sparta (McMichael, 1985: 366-444).

● 'Of Mice and Men' (American novel) by John Steinbeck: Candy as a young, lonely, seductive woman who likes to be the centre of the men's interest. She is killed by Lennie accidentally who is a strong and big, mentally retarded worker when he panics with the reaction of Candy as Lennie likes to hold soft and small things. Lennie is later shot by his best friend George since he thinks that Lennie is going to be hung by Candy's husband who is the owner of the farm (McMichael, 1985: 1792-1805).

● 'The Death of a Salesman' (American play) by Arthur Miller: The woman is Willy's mistress, seductive, demanding and sexy. Willy's son, Biff sees the woman in his father's hotel room and learns about his father's affair so he is fatally affected by his father's affair and loses his respect for his father.

● 'The Fisherman and his Soul' (British short story) by Oscar Wilde: The witch is a red haired, evil, insincere symbolic character who is in love with the fisherman. Also, the woman in the bazaar symbolises Persephone, the wife of Hades (underworld God) who represents evil, darkness and hell (Kermode and Hollander, 1973: 1126-1176).

● 'Animal Farm' (British novel) by George Orwell: Molly is a beautiful female horse interested in luxury and comfort and a symbolic character that represents apolitical, bourgeois class (Kermode and Hollander, 1973: 2140-2160).

● 'The Rocking Horse Winner' (British short story) D.H. Lawrence: Hester is an ambitious, dominant and heartless woman, who has children but an unhappy marriage. She is fond of money and not affectionate towards her children. Her son dies because of her obsession with money and neglect (Kermode and Hollander, 1973: 1816-1969).

4.3. Underappreciated, Emotionally Trapped Woman

● 'The Chrysanthemums' (American short story) by John Steinbeck: Eliza Allen is a strong, intelligent, interesting, passionate woman with no professional career or children. She devotes all her energy to maintaining her house and garden craving for the interest of her husband but is tired of the responsibilities and roles defined by her marriage and the society (McMichael, 1985: 1792-1805).

● 'The Story of an Hour' (American short story) by Kate Chopin: Lousie Mallard is an emotional woman with heart problems. She is depended on her husband and is secretly happy when she hears that the husband is dead in an accident since she feels underappreciated and caged within her marriage. Ironically, she 'dies of joy'when she learns that her husband is in fact alive since her freedom is taken away for the second time with the appearance of her husband (McMichael, 1985: 1081-1086).

● 'A Rose for Emily' (American short story) by William Faulkner: Emily Grierson is an upper class, single, obsessed and mysterious woman. She lives in the past, does not face with the reality. She is depended upon the past and the memories of her father and craving for love and affection. She kills her only love Homer as a result of her obsession and lives with the corpse till she dies (McMichael, 1985: 1758-1788).

4.4. Woman as an Object of Love

● 'The Fisherman and his Soul' (British short story) by Oscar Wilde: Mermaid as a subhuman fantastic character is fisherman's love. She is pure, beautiful and innocent with blond hair, but selfish (Kermode and Hollander, 1973: 1126-1176).

● 'Annabel Lee (American poem) by Edgar Allan Poe: The writer expresses his eternal and obsessed love for a beautiful woman. The poem has supernatural and gothic elements like angels and demons (McMichael, 1985: 366-444).

● 'She Walks in Beauty' (British poem) by Lord Byron: The poet expresses his love for a beautiful woman with dark hair 'combined with internal beauty' (Kermode and Hollander, 1973: 285-398).

4.5. Female Writer Expressing Her Love

● 'How Do I love Thee?' (British poem) by Elizabeth Barret Browning: The writer expresses her unconditional love as a female writer which is an unconventional call for romance in the Victorian Period in England as females were expected to be submissive and to have secondary roles like maintaining household (Kermode and Hollander, 1973: 1475-1478).

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

The categories emerged from these literary texts are examined from social and universal perspectives in order to give a deeper understanding of gender and culture relationship. In John Steinbeck's stories 'The Pearl', 'Of Mice and Men' and 'The Chrysanthemums', power, class distinction, poverty, money, the good versus the bad, greed, cruel nature, the decline of American dream, inequality of gender, lack of affection were depicted. Faith and destiny together with cruel nature and society and social norms were questioned within a naturalist point of view. In 'the Pearl', Juana and in 'The Chrysanthemums', Eliza are depicted as strong and intelligent married women but somehow they are obedient and modest and especially Eliza is struggling by the boredom of her marriage but cannot change the expectations defined by the society and marriage as a social institution. In 'Of Mice and Men', however, Candy has a minor role as a sexy and seductive married woman seeking for attention which causes a tragic end for her and for Lennie who is a strong, mentally retarded man who likes to hold soft and small things.

Similarly, Arthur Miller in the 'The Death of a Salesman' portrayed American dream, dilemma, abandonment, self-delusion, alienation, betrayal, dreams and hopes, pride, generation gap, respect and reputation. He also used common objects as symbols such as 'seeds', 'diamonds', 'red Chevrolet', 'Swedish cheese', 'silk stockings' and 'refrigerator' in order to criticise capitalism and materialism and great depression in late 1940s in the United States. Foreshadowing and flashbacks were important techniques used by Miller while he was depicting extraordinary tragedy of ordinary Willy Loman. Willy's wife Linda, like Juana, is obedient and modest but also underappreciated and trapped within the marriage like Eliza. However, the sexy and seductive woman is demanding for example Willy buys her expensive silk stockings while Linda repairs them in order to save money.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a Romantic American writer so reliance on emotion, opposing rules, nature, imagination, supernatural, witch hunting, evil, superstition, sin, morality, perfectionism, science versus intuition, death, and gender roles involving passive and obedient women and dominant men were the important topics discussed by him. Due to his Puritan background, the writer was interested in picturing passion, evil, sin and the red colour referring to witchcraft. In his story, 'The Birthmark', Aylmer's wife Georgiana, has a very tragic end since she is killed by her husband as a result of his obsession for perfection. Alymer decides to remove the red birthmark on Georgiana's cheek and gives her a liquid which kills Georgiana who is a loving, modest and obedient wife.

Edgar Allan Poe was the pioneer of American dark Romanticism containing gothic issues, nature and supernatural conflict, eternal love, madness, crime, violence, transformation from good into evil, beauty and mythological references. In 'To Helen' and 'Annabel Lee' he depicted idealised beauty and immortal love. His short story, 'The Black Cat' involves darker elements of obsession, violence, crime and murder. The narrator kills his wife by an axe when she is trying to save the cat's life as an animal lover. She has a minor role in the story and abused by her husband. Yet, Poe in his poems 'Annabel Lee' and 'To Helen', portrays his rather obsessed love towards beautiful women. The former poem contains supernatural and gothic romantic elements and the latter is a reference to Helen who is the most beautiful mythological female figure in the earth who caused Trojan War (Hard, 2003). (SPACE BELOW)

William Butler Yeats depicted rapid industrialisation, social and economic problems of the Victorian Period in England. Nature, the quest for truth, ancient Greek history and mythology, appearance versus reality are the common topics pictured by Yeats. In 'Leda and the Swan', he portrayed the rape of Leda by Zeus in disguise of a swan as a mythological, supernatural and symbolic character. Leda gives birth to Helen as a semi-god, mythological character who causes destruction for Trojans (Hard, 2003). So the power abuse, rape, innocence versus trust is the main themes in this poem (Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015).

Industrialism created isolation, alienation, separation from nature in the Victorian Period. Oscar Wilde was the pioneer of the Aesthetic Movement supporting the idea of 'Art for Art's Sake'. Wilde depicted the good versus the bad, symbolic and fantastic features and biblical references, gender differences, trilogy of mind, soul and body in his story. He also referred to Greek mythology, Anderson's fairy tales, Marlowe's Dr. Faustus and Freudian Notion of 'id', 'ego' and 'superego' (Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Köksal, 2015; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015). In the 'The Fisherman and His Soul', Wilde pictures mermaid as a beautiful, blond and innocent fantasy lover. But, he also depicts the witch as a red haired, evil, insincere symbolic character who is in love with the fisherman and the woman in the bazaar representing Persephone, the wife of Hades (underworld God) who is associated with evil, darkness and hell (Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Hard, 2003; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015).

In England, Romanticism had its greatest influence from the end of the eighteenth century up through 1870. The primary vehicle was poetry. Romanticism stressed the emotion as a source of aesthetic experience. Lord Byron's 'She Walks in Beauty' describes the intense feeling that Byron experienced when he first sees the beautiful woman. The other important characteristic topic of the Romanticism is the nature. Byron refers to natural elements in order to describe better what he felt when he meets the woman. The French Revolution and Industrial Revolution shaped Byron's beliefs regarding freedom, equality, love of nature and heroism. Unlike Wilde, Byron is idolising this woman for being so beautiful that he compares her to Earth's natural beauty (Jump, 1982; Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015).

George Orwellwas a World War II (1945) artist in England. His period was shaped by discoveries and changes in science, religion, philosophy, materialism, socialism, communism and Darwin's evolution theory which created big dilemmas with Bible's teachings. Orwell had a futuristic style and predictions about the world's future government styles. In this highly political and symbolic novel 'Animal Farm', pigs were pictured as representative political characters, the donkey and the dogs as police force, raven as church referring to class distinction between rich and poor labour class, namely Soviet Revolution. Interestingly, Molly is a beautiful female horse who is fond of luxury and comfort representing apolitical, bourgeois class (Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015).

The influence of the World War I, racism, feminism, communism, trade and democracy are the important topics in D.H. Lawrence's work in England. Money, materialism, family, obsession, neglect, power, greed and mother and son relationship was pictured tragically in 'The Rocking Horse Winner'. Perhaps Hester is the most evil female character among the women who are analysed. She is an ambitious, dominant and heartless married woman who caused the death of her son because of her obsession with money and neglect (Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015).

William Faulkner was a 20th century modernist American writer. American civil war, community and isolation, death, obsession, slavery, class distinction, and racism are the important issues which were depicted by the writer. In 'A Rose for Emily', gothic elements are used. The story contains flashback and foreshadowing elements as a reflection of stream of consciousness technique. Emily suffers from an obsessive compulsive love and kills her love, Homer and lives with the corpse till she dies. Emily is one of the strangest women among the categories with her obsession of past and Southern America.

Elizabeth Barret Browning and Kate Chopin are the female writers who raised the feminist issues and women's rights in England and in the United States. Browning was a British Victorian Period artist. In this period the influence of the Industrial Revolution in England was great as the factories were founded and started mass production which caused poverty and social class distinction. Democracy, feminism, socialism and capitalism were the important movements. However, men were the centre of the family life and women were responsible for the children and the housework and 'getting married' was an important target for them. Females were not expected to have interest in politics, literature and art. They were isolated by men and depended on either husbands or fathers. Yet, Browning, as a female artist, was always interested in the position of women in society and reacted against social norms. The poet was strongly against slavery and her father's authority. She wrote many poems about social issues, child labour, immortal love, human and women's rights. She was so brave and wrote 'sonnets' for her love Robert Browning who was also a British poet.

In 'How Do I Love Thee?' the immortal and unconditional love was depicted and influenced many British and American female writers like Emily Dickenson, Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen (Urgan, 1986 and 1989, Tarakçıoğlu, 2015). Feminist issues and women's rights, the forbidden joy of independence, oppressive marriage, freedom, female versus male roles and internal conflict were the common topics portrayed by American writer, Kate Chopin. In the 'The Story of an Hour', the 'open window', 'springtime', 'patches of blue sky' and 'heart troubles' were used as the symbolic elements in order to underline female rights and social norms rising in the 20th. Century. In this story, the protagonist, Lousie Mallard is depended on her husband and feels underappreciated and caged within her marriage. She 'dies of joy'when she learns that her husband is alive since her freedom is taken away by her husband.

As a summary, the women who are analysed in the presentations are obedient and modest, beautiful and destructive, underappreciated and trapped by marriage, they are the passive objects of love, and differently, Elizabeth Barret Browning is categorised as a female writer expressing her love. So the women are betrayed or killed by their husbands like Georgiana and the wife in 'The Black Cat', Leda is raped by the Swan (Zeus) and Leda's girl Helen caused the Trojan war (Hard, 2003). They are either married or childless woman with no professional career, devoting all energy to maintaining house and garden like Lousie and Eliza. Emily is a single obsessed woman who kills her beloved one. Hester is interested in luxury and money. They have inner conflicts. Red colour such as red haired witch and red birthmark in Georgiana's cheek are associated with witchcraft, sin and evil. Mermaid as a fantastic and witch as a supernatural character are described by Wilde which can be referred to fairy tales and Roman and Greek mythology which are sexist regarding the personified characteristics of gods and goddesses like abusive Zeus and jealous Hera (Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Hard, 2003; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015). Sky, God and heavens are masculine or they have masculine characteristics. However, the earth is productive and feminine.

Moreover, most of the female characters or rather types have either minor roles like Linda in Miller's 'The Death of a Salesman', Juana and Candy in Steinbeck's works or nameless as the wife in Poe's 'The Black Cat', the woman in 'The Death of a Salesman' or fantastic stereotypical allusions like the witch and the mermaid in Wilde's 'The Fisherman and his Soul' whether they are good or bad characters. Similarly, the female characters in fairy tales such as 'Snow White', 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Cinderella' are passive women waiting for the prince (Köksal, 2015). The narration of history and literature is masculine even in the movies, serials and graphic novels such as Spiderman; superman and batman men have super powers. Ian Fleming's James Bond is an intelligent, talented and handsome spy who is a womaniser (Urgan, 1986 and 1989; Tarakçıoğlu, 2015). In the advertisements generally sexy women are used for introducing the products. Notions like crying, being sensitive and loved one, household are associated with females, but; politics, administrative roles, high status professions like being a doctor, judge and professor and socially active and dominant roles such as engaging in politics and being a union member are associated with males which can be explained by diverse social roles and responsibilities framed by culture (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003; Uluocak and Aslan, 2011).

These issues are highly related with longer period of formal education, occupation and consequently with socio-economic status but also depends on child-rearing practices and role definitions which are less sexist (Wardhaugh, 1990). Uluocak and Aslan's (2011) study revealed that women are mostly associated with domestic roles and socially, financially and politically less involved or pacified in social activities by men especially by their husbands. From this perspective, as Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003: 482) state *'the words we use to refer to certain individuals or groups reflect our individual non-linguistic attitudes and may reflect the culture and views of society'.* They also mention that language reflects social concerns and sexism in society but language itself is not sexist, taboo or racist but it can connote such attitudes. For example, from Old English *huswif*, 'housewife', the word *hussy* was derived so many abusive or sexual overtones like *dish, tomato, chick, bunny* and *doll* acquired secondary implications gradually (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003).

Studies analysing the gendered language indicate that derogatory or sexual connotations enter the language with no pejorative implications but gradually gain them when society itself institutionalises such attitudes. Thus, only when everyone in society is truly equal in every sense there will be little concern for the asymmetries that exist in language (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003). Kramsh (1998: 9) argues that gender and ethnic studies have shown the hegemonic effects of dominant cultures and the authority they have means questioning one's own intellectual inquiry, and *'...accepting the fact that knowledge itself is coloured by the social and historical context in which it is acquired and disseminated'.* She states that culture is heterogeneous and constantly changing and hence; even the same discourse community has different life stories depending on age, gender, ethnicity, belief system and political opinions.

Therefore, literature, culture and gender relationship, comparing cultural, universal issues such as love, good and evil regardless of gender difference and roles in the society need to be discussed carefully. Fostering men and women interaction and co-operation (activities, team work); bringing up boys and girls differently; avoiding sexist vocabulary such as 'mankind', 'chairman' and 'science man'; fostering social, cognitive, cultural and affective processing and experiences would enable students to understand and appreciate different cultures and perspectives within the natural context and assists an engagement with literary texts for an enjoyment and love for literature and as well as for personal development (Wardhaugh, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1993; Grabe and Stoller, 2002; Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003).

Rosenblatt's (1969, 1993) **'**Reader-response theory' can be adopted since this approach towards reading stimulatessocial, cognitive and affective processing and experiences of the individual reader suggesting that transaction of meaning depends on the individual reader's experiences and interpretation. In relation, changing the shift from Lazar's (1993) 'The Language Model' which proposes literary texts as a tool for the teaching of specific language skills, vocabulary or structures to the 'The Cultural Model' enabling students to understand and appreciate different cultures and perspectives within the natural context and also to 'The Personal Growth Model' assisting an engagement with literary texts for an enjoyment and love for literature would work well in terms of involving students both intellectually and emotionally in learning the target language throughfocusing on personal experiences, feelings and opinions. Revisiting the content of the relevant literature courses, focusing on period, writer, literary movements, gender, culture and literature relationship, female issues, equality of social roles and reading female writers like Kate Chopin, Elizabeth Barret Browning and Jane Austen can be located within the curriculum and the content of the relevant courses(see also Yavuz, 2014).

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