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A New Endeavour in Teaching Classics

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to determine how students, aiming at becoming teachers of Turkish Language and Literature, define classics and their knowledge of classics; to shed light on the question of how classics, as the basis of language, literature and culture, can be adapted in line with the needs of the present day for better public visibility. The purposeful sampling method was utilized in this study, which was prepared based on the ''World Literature'' course included in the junior year curriculum at the Department of Turkish Language and Literature, Faculty of Science and Letters. A chronological order was followed for the course ''World Literature,'' which covered works from Ancient Greek Literature to Modern Western Literature, and an anthology was compiled from globally acclaimed works. This chronology aims at demonstrating the reflection of social and cultural life on literature by means of literary periods. At the end of each lecture, Turkish classics were interpreted through comparison with a globally acclaimed work and its equivalents in Turkish literature. Fifty students were given open-ended questions in relation to their definition of classics, followed by in-class discussions and descriptive compositions based on the resulting data. Certain themes, shedding light on the restructuring of the teaching of classics, were determined by means of the general inductive approach. Consequently, the conclusion covers the assessment of these themes.

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Keywords:
Classics, culture, popularization, modernization, aesthetics

Introduction

The first part of the study primarily dwells upon the contribution of culture, in both its traditional and reformative dimensions, to the formation of the classics, and how culture guides society in accepting them as such. From this point of view, it is necessary to handle the classics within the framework of culture. The design of our study is based upon restructuring the teaching of the classics, which are scrutinized within the framework of culture and education. It is also a necessity to provide a concrete and vivid description of the causes for and results of issues encountered in teaching classics within the scope of cultural background and social realities.

The Relationship between Culture and Classicism

Prior to touching upon the adaptations of classicism both in education and culture, it proves fruitful to elaborate on the definition and understanding of culture. Raymond Williams (1983) defines culture as ''the expression of the intellectual, psychological and aesthetic development of the individual, group or society'' (p. 90).

Geert Hofstede (1997) studies cultural relativity, cultural differences between groups and societies, and emphasizes that cultures cannot be defined as superior or inferior to one another. He states that cultural differences manifest themselves in nested levels as symbols, heroes/heroines, ceremonies and values. Values are located in the center, namely constituting the innermost group (p. 7). All levels stand in constant change

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since each level is interconnected and interactive. In the present day, where visuality and rapid consumption serve as goals rather than tools, the frequent vicissitude of symbols bears an impact upon other levels and causes them to change.

On the other hand, Andrew Milner (1996) defines culture as the intellectual development of a society. He points out that literary value, having the most contribution to this development, cannot be appropriated to either a minority study or to mass cultures, as both are interconnected in practice. Literary value serves as a transition term with its contextual and inter-textual connections in both prominent and popular texts. It is formed by a certain group under special conditions, according to special criteria and in line with certain objectives. In reality, culture is nothing but a culture-based social structuring (p. 11, 22).

Berna Moran[2] (1990) puts forward that ideologies shape culture and explains the dilemmas of Ottoman society through Şerif Mardin's[3] ''high culture-elite'' and ''low culture-public'' dichotomies. Mardin points out that cultures within Ottoman society interacted despite these dilemmas; however, this interaction dwindled as a result of Westernization (pp. 11-12).

According to Güvenç (1971), a well-known Turkish sociologist, it is wrong to dichotomize culture as either Eastern or Western. He points out that there exist various intertwined cultures within the boundaries of a country (pp. 114-115). He also finds it wrong to perceive fine art activities as proof of high culture in Turkey (Güvenç, 1985, p. 127).

In his article titled ''Cultural Criticism and Society'', Theodore W. Adorno (2004) articulates that the world has turned into an open-air jail, and that everything has been rendered same and similar. He also adds that it is, as a consequence, difficult to know what is dependent on what in culture. He underlines the fact that ideologies, philosophies and movements on which the culture once fed have disappeared and been replaced by commercials, fake images offered by the material world (p. 178).

Within the framework of these definitions, modernization (with a focus on Turkish Westernization) also bears an impact upon how the history of the classic has been shaped, is reflected upon the present, and how the transitions between the past and present are actualized.

Modernization and the Classics

In conjunction with modernization, traditions started to be ignored; local elements were disregarded, and mass popular cultures were supported. Thus, the connection between the past and convention progressively weakened, and society was alienated from the classics. Shaped through modernization in particular, urban culture ostracized cultural content in objects through prescribing functionalism and visuality to the individual. As a result, on public background, tradition and old culture of classics began to be forgotten. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that the individual would be directed towards a quest to concretize his/her interest in his/her lost roots (Öğün, 2006, pp. 168-169).

In the modernization process, there was an attempt to provide a roof over our society by means of the symbols of Western civilization. Symbols in the cultural changes determine the course of these transactions. Popularization, understanding and adoption of classics follow this course as well. In another parlance, inevitable cultural changes and dilemmas, engendered by modern life, determine classicism through certain symbols. These symbols are presented to the public as the priorities of modernization and Westernization (Eroğlu, 2004). On the other hand, Terry Eagleton (2011) emphasizes the fact that modern societies are now asocial, anomalous and valueless, namely cultureless. Within this context, culture consists of a daily existence in a society that consumes values. As a consequence of the daily formation and consumption of values, culture, formerly an elitist concept belonging to the high class, has been transformed into a concept excluding very few elements. The conflict between high and popular culture today is rooted in nationalism, tradition, religion, ethnic origin and popularity. An artificial universalism, pumped into society by means of the media in particular, results in a harsher expression of individual identities. Not only does the commercially-liberalized mass culture, a modern-age requirement, stand against high culture, but it also debilitates the moral foundation of social life (p. 151).

[2] English Literature Professor and literary critic

[3] Turkish sociologist who mainly studied on orientalism and westernization in Turkey

Popular Culture and Temporal Change in Aesthetics

Whereas the term ''culture'' was associated with education and civilization in the 19th century, it has drawn on a new meaning connected to material production and expressed through symbols in conjunction with industrialization and rapidly developing technology. It is crucial to take these symbols into consideration when defining a group or lifestyles in a given period. To exemplify, bearing a paramount role in the definition of the classics, the word ''aesthetic'' defines functionality, pragmatism and visuality in the present day. Whereas the educational, formative aspect of this word is disregarded, it also does not carry a substantial importance for social values any more (Williams, 1983). Within this context, literature, art, music and aesthetics are shaped by understandings influenced by popular culture. Despite all of its negative aspects, popular culture is encouraged in modern societies in which an individualist human is created (Eroğlu, 2004). This is caused by liquid modernity, which feeds the transitory, rapidly consumed popular culture, which can survive thanks to this liquidity. Liquid modernity is an analogy for the disorder, instability and chaos of our contemporary world. Lifestyles and social values stand far from being definite, fixed, static and orderly. The uncertainty of the past and tradition has been perceived within this liquid modernity; new traditions or provisional habits, have been formed gradually according to the needs of the society, render this uncertainty possible for a swift transition from one order to the other (Bauman, 2006). Hence, emotions, thoughts and values do not signify anything since they are constantly consumed, and thus become stereotypical. As a result, the relationship between the classic literary work and the individual is rendered monotonous and meaningless.

On the other hand, Bakhtin (2002) desires to see significant connections between the aforementioned past and the living moment and to understand the historical development of this past since a separated, alienated mass of the past constitutes nothing but a ghost. In other words, such perception of a separated past is fruitless and spurious. According to him, the past should be creative and should influence the now. It is paramount to make concrete, local nature and history (in which time and space is integrated in order to construct a meaningful and lively aesthetics) a part of the human being (pp. 33-34, 49).

In our research, reading the classics, especially novels, sheds light on popularization of the past. It is possible to observe the transformation of the past, the classics and tradition through the novel, a literary genre generated by modernity. In his article titled ''What Is a Novel?'', Terry Eagleton (2005) approves Bakhtin's assertion that the novel was born out of a culture feeding on the broken pieces of other literary genres. He also adds that the novel is a parasite feeding on the crumbs of high culture, which endows it with a negative identity. In this way, it embodies an amalgam of languages, lifestyles, characters and depictions like a parasite. It becomes the epitome of modern society rather than its reflection. According to Eagleton, ''being modern'' amounts to referring everything that happened ten minutes earlier to the past, coding the past based on the present, creating a nostalgia or running after a hope. This is one of the new kinds of individualism. The reshaping of literary works in terms of style, narration and language constitutes this individualism's struggle for existence. Although it is said that classicism lost its authority throughout time, the restructuring of this authority underwent a different transformation. For authority, it is not a matter of making up a source but turning into a source itself. The fact that daily life is the source of creativity in the contemporary world, the rapid consumption of meaning, and an increase in alienation thereof meaning brings a better explanation to the distancing from classicism (pp. 6-8, 18).

Method

This study was conducted as a qualitative study using the "general inductive approach" and consisted of classroom observations, students' reflective papers, and semi-structured written interviews, consisting of open-ended questions and 50 student participants. Students in the Turkish language and literature department taking the course titled "World Literature" were chosen as purposeful samples, based upon accessibility to the data (Patton, 2002) and the topics in which the researcher pursues work in teaching the classics.

Moreover, the purpose of using the "general inductive approach" is

- "To condense extensive and varied raw data into a brief summary format;

- To establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data, and to ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research); and
- To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experience or process which are evident in the text data." (Thomas, 2003, p. 238).

The following questions guided this research:

1. How are the classics perceived in education?
2. What sorts of relation exist between classical literature - culture, modern culture - classical culture, the classics – aesthetic sentiment?
3. How does education exhibit these relations?

Participants and Setting

This research was conducted with 50 students in the department of Turkish Language and Literature in a state university. Although they were not registered in the Faculty of Education, most of them were planning to become professional teachers. Moreover, they were selected as a sample due to their attending the course called "World Literature" for two semesters. With the help of this course, we found the opportunity to investigate the various comments on teaching the classics made by students. Therefore, they were selected as a purposeful sampling in order to get "information rich and illuminative; that is, they offer useful manifestations of their perceptions about teaching classics. Sampling then, is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to population" (Patton, 2002, p. 40).

Data Collection

Four different ways of data gathering from the participants were employed: 1. Written semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. 2. Students' reflective papers. 3. Classroom observations on discussion topics (researcher being an active participant). 4. Document analysis on the samples of examinations, course pack and reflective papers. The use of multiple data sources allowed both researcher and participants to confirm the data. In other terms, triangulating the data contributed to building credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, interpretations and conclusions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

An anthology, compiled from globally acclaimed classics encompassing Ancient Greek literature and Modern Western Literature, was provided to the students. The literary works were handled by means of teaching methods such as description, comparative question-answer and interpretation. The students tried to identify the reflections of the literary work in question on Turkish literature at the end of each lecture.

As a result of in-class observation and discussion, it was determined that the discussion axis of the students was mostly concentrated on the classics within the context of modern-popular-traditional and East-West. Based on each literary period in question and the classics read, students were given open-ended questions at regular intervals about their understanding and interpretation of the classical work in the first stage of the study. The second stage of the study was comprised of open-ended questions related to the relationship between classical literature and culture, the understanding of modern and classical culture, and development of the aesthetic feeling through classics. The students were asked to author descriptive compositional works as well as comparison and sampling. Questions in the second stage were determined by means of analysis of the data gathered in the first stage.

Data Analysis

All data was evaluated using the general inductive approach, which allowed us to reach "the underlying structure of experiences or processes" (Thomas, 2003, p. 238) found in students' reflections. This approach aided in finding emergent themes and patterns of different concepts, insights and understandings among culture, modernity and classics. Thus, the coding process in general inductive analysis provided identifying themes related to the evaluation objectives. The first stage of analysis was constituted by the close reading of the text, which was done by member checking with colleagues. During the analysis, core meanings about teaching the classics in all texts were labeled, categorized and developed into specific themes. Besides, member checks (Patton, 2002) were carried on in all stages of examining data. They allowed for the review of main categories and allowed processes to become more evident and reliable.

Depending on classroom discussions over the content of the classics and their current popularity, interviews were conducted and reflective paper discussion questions were given to them. Their responses were repeatedly checked and compared with each other in order to identify salient issues on teaching the classics. The emergent themes taken directly from these issues were discussed by the students as well. After having supported the key findings with the literature review on the role of the classics in education, certain specific themes were concluded to bridge the research objectives with results.

Findings and Interpretation

Understanding the Classics

Students were first asked to define their understanding of the classics. They defined the classic as an aesthetic movement bearing general rules, a certain order protecting values and defying time. In addition, according to the students, ''the classic holds universal emotions, thoughts and values; they are common emotions and thoughts shared by everyone, anywhere, under any circumstances''.

Nevertheless, the students opine that although the classics verbalize the common understanding and thoughts of humanity, they are accepted to the extent that they are adapted to present day needs. For instance, regarded as classical Turkish novels, Reşat Nuri Güntekin's "Yaprak Dökümü, Çalıkuşu" and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's "Aşk-ı Memnû" were adapted to television as soap operas. These television products underwent changes in terms of costumes, setting, historical period, characters and plots, which contributed to their popularity among the viewers. It is an inevitable fact that visuality occupies a crucial space in public perception in a period when media adaptations of these classics are preferred. Moreover, students are of the opinion that accepting Fuzuli's[4] works as a classic is predicated upon Islam.

Fuzuli's masterpiece poem, "Leyla and Mecnun", served as the most popular literary example for students. They mostly focused on themes such as the ideal human type, sincere expression and divine love, within the context of the classics. In another parlance, the perception of the aesthetic and culture guided by divine existence and power obliges the individual to define the classic. Another example concentrates on the analogy drawn between Orhan Gencebay's[5] and Mecnun's (male character in the poem authored by Fuzuli) understanding of love since it is an utmost virtue to glorify the beloved and sacrifice oneself for the beloved. Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables", Fuzuli's "Mecnun", Necip Fazıl's "Hakim Bey" ("Your Honour", "Judge") can serve as the same type of virtuous individuals.

According to the students, these works are significant in terms of their messages. They deserve to be defined as "classic" to the extent that they address the problems of contemporary humans and appeal to their emotions and thoughts. For instance, a student defining Fuzuli as a "classic" also refers to Kemal Sunal[6] and his film "Hababam Sınıfı" as a classic.

Within this context, it proves useful to allocate space for the cultural studies of Martin Stokes (2011) on Turkish pop music. Stokes defines Orhan Gencebay as "the fatherly figure of impeccable mannerliness, and public voice of arabesque" (p. 119). From the students' perspective, this artist is referred to as a classic thanks to his abovementioned characteristics. Key expressions, which the students use to determine the definition of the classic, draw attention to a new understanding of classics: visuality reflecting our era, values and concepts adopted by the society, common universal, humanistic themes, popularity, addressing to the public. The newly formed understanding of classics is handled, to an extent, in conjunction with these definitions in this study.

The second part of the paper focuses on the issue of how classics can be incorporated into contemporary education. By means of the following questions, this study attempts to determine what kind of an educational understanding the students (studying teaching) bear within the context of cultural-classics-modernization:

1. Which literary works do you prefer to teach within the framework of classical literature and culture?
2. What criteria do you follow for the selection of literary works?

[4] One of the most famous and greatest poets of Turkish literatüre.
[5] One of the most famous composers of arabesque music in Turkey.
[6] Turkish actor and comedian who mostly plays the role of common sense Turkish people.

3. How do you define your understanding of modern culture and classical culture?
4. For which literary works would you allocate space for the development of an aesthetic sensation?

The relation between classical and modern culture. Students touched upon literary works and authors whom they find to be important figures in Turkish and Western culture and literature. Their answers covered the following authors:

Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Ömer Seyfettin, Oğuz Atay, Orhan Pamuk, Virginia Woolf, Fuzuli, Rumi (Mevlana), Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Cervantes, Victor Hugo, Shakespeare, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Dickens.

They attribute their selection to the fact that the works of these authors contain tracks from social life; transfer social experiences; connect a bridge between the past and reflect the adventure of modernization. In sum, the determinant theme is preparing for life by means of benefiting from social experiences reflected in the classics.

Modern versus classical culture understanding. Students were asked about their understanding of modern and classical culture when comparing the two. Students preferred to provide an answer to this question within the context of an East-West comparison. They perceive the classic as "us". For instance, whereas "Les Miserables" represents Western culture, "Aşk-ı Memnû" represents "us". Classical Divan poetry, Sufi literature, classical Turkish handicrafts, and classical Turkish music are demonstrative examples of classical culture.

In teaching the classics, tradition and national consciousness are handled together, and the importance of family is touched upon as well. National culture, local culture, national history, ancient culture, tradition and local art are additionally referred to; however, Eastern culture, which reflects the essence and aesthetic of classicism, is neglected, according to the students.

Students define the classic as a phenomenon consisting of Western art forms such as modern painting, sculpture, classical music, and theatre, presenting an aesthetic based on the effort of being different. Moreover, individuals express themselves better through painting and Western music, which the students consider as outside of our traditional arts. On the other hand, modern culture is acquired subsequently, and shaped by the individual's taste in time. For this reason, it is quite individualistic and provides more space for liberty. It also integrates with science and the arts in harmony, appeals to all tastes, and blends more easily with other cultures. According to them, modern culture belongs to the West; it is occasionally without rules, and only consists of technology. Therefore, it is expressed as a culture that renders individuals lazy, degenerates and alienates them.

Despite all these negativities, students resort to consensus between modern and classical culture: the classics and modern literary works should be dealt with by means of comparing differences and should complement one another; visually and easily memorable, soul-and mind-oriented literary works should be selected. To exemplify, Yahya Kemal and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar are accepted as being Western and classic. While they utilized cultural motifs of music, poetry and architecture of the Ottoman era, they masterfully integrate both classical literature and Western literature in their works. For the students, they serve as modernity shaped by classicism today, like Bach and Mozart do. Even though they are classics, they are still able to address the modern world. Hence, the works should be presented to our culture and to us in a concrete, understandable way. Although the students seek to stake a claim to that of "us" and to glorify "us", they cannot avoid the charm of the modern. The students are in need of the slogans of our age, "individualism, progressivism and scientificity", for their survival.

For the students, classical culture serves as the common sense and conscience of society, whereas modern culture represents the progressive, libertarian and venturesome side of society. Classic culture covers examples such as Fuzuli, Rumi, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek for students who underline the social and moral duties in these literary works. As a matter of fact, they refer to these literary works as classics (without knowing the reasons for their being classic) owing to the responsibilities laden by the higher education system. From their point of view, modern culture is represented by Yusuf Atılgan, Nazım Hikmet, Oğuz Atay, Cemal Süreya. It is because of the fact that these authors convey the internal conflicts, loneliness, and

clandestine inner world of the human. If modern culture is a tool of better expression for the individual, classics, e.g. Rumi's "Masnavi" should be simplified and adapted to the present day. In other words, conveying the East, the classical and the national through modern techniques, opportunities and liberties provided by the West stand as the thematic result derived from the comparisons enumerated above.

Improving the aesthetic feeling despite popularization. As to the question regarding the aesthetic, we are faced with the issue of selecting literary works for the improvement of aesthetic feeling. In spite of the fact that the classics improve aesthetic feeling, the concept of the aesthetic is frequently defined, except for arts and literature, on the basis of visuality and its effect today (Williams, 1983, p. 32). This illuminates our understanding of the aesthetic, which has undergone changes in time, and brings a different perspective to our understanding and interpretation of the classics.

According to the students, poetry serves as the best literary genre for conveying the aesthetic feeling by means of its subject, style and form. Painting conveys the order in nature, embodies all movements and effects. Music appeals to the soul. Poetry, however, is the utter opulence of all perspective, the distilled form of all the arts, perception approximating to the truth. In addition, painting, sculpting, ballet, architecture, theatre, cinema are visual arts, and defined as "concrete and easily-accessible branches of art", and regarded as important by the students. Students opine that these forms of art convey the meaning and the message in a more concrete way by means of blending dreams and life, and contribute to a better understanding and continuity of the literary work. Since the novel, story and theatre seek to exhibit life as it is, they are witness to unpleasantness and fail to climb the peak of the aesthetic. At the same time they might be prone to popularization, ideologies and mass production; however, the use of words, fluency of the artistic style, appeal to imagination and emotions, becoming public property serve as significant criteria for the shaping of the aesthetic. From this point of view, students allocate a special place for songs that reflect social culture. Students also execute a different classification, and classify music within the visual arts. They underline the fact that music has the potential to be visualized, and therefore to concretize emotions. We reckon that video clips have an enormous impact on their assessment. In the present day, music has a special kind of audio-visual appeal for youth.

Some literary works establish classical aesthetics by means of a rich word repertoire and artistic expression, and dealing with the national culture and past. In comparison, some adopt a social mission and follow the tracks of modernism. This aesthetic is fed by the imagination, descriptions, perceptual and intellectual depth provided by these works. As noticed, the aesthetic is also dealt with within the context of the East-West and classic-modern dichotomies. The students point to the effects of Western aesthetics on literature as well as other fields. For them, Claude Debussy's "Claire De Lune", the films "The Piano" and "Envy", painters such as Rembrandt, Fausto Zonaro, the painting "Girl with the Pearl Earring", paintings by Osman Hamdi, and Rodin's "Thinker" sculpture are among of the best examples of Western aesthetics. Whereas they prefer to convey the aesthetic feeling through audio-visual works of the Western aesthetic mostly, they also seek to situate the trilogy of classic-national-modern within this thematic framework.

Discussion

Upon assessment of the dominant themes derived from the sections above, it was ascertained that the students performed an East-West comparison and experienced confusion regarding the classic-national-modern trilogy that is a reflection of the abovementioned comparison. Two resulting main themes can be expressed in the following way: social literary works, which are constituted by freely expressed, visible, concrete, audio-visual works presented by the West, can be taken as examples, and thus adapting and interpreting the literary works in a way to meet a contemporary value and concept will contribute to education. Therefore, in order for a classic to be understood and interpreted, there is a need for a certain amount of educational background and history. Although it is shaped by ideologies and social structures, education is required for the realization of any interpretation, examination, or arrangement. Culture feeds education, and it is, therefore, a necessity to consider the sociological and psychological perceptions of miscellaneous periods in which these literary works were created.

Eroğlu (2004) points out that the social and individual dichotomy in Turkey is generally dealt with in the framework of the East-West axis. In our study, students emphasize that Western civilization is "self-centered" as opposed to "us-centered" Turkish civilization. The students draw the same picture of the East

and West in their minds. From their perspective, the Eastern world is described as optimistic, abstinent, hopeful, happy, mystical, conservative, sharing, helpful, self-sacrificing, traditionalist, devoted to their families in contrast to the Western world, which can be described as pessimistic, unhappy, materialistic, modern, scientific, educated, prim, lonely, innovative, logical. In fact, their perceptions of the East-West are discussed on the basis of the classics.

It is a fact that the classics devolve their cultural background from one generation to another. This sort of literary work "shapes the historical, social, cultural, religious, economic, moral values in the individual's soul; serve as examples; preserve their utmost characteristics against time" (Kalfa, 2013, p. 106). Bearing such a mission, this cultural property makes substantial contributions to education and personal development. A piece of cultural property as such not only carries high values in terms of literature and the aesthetic but also presents an impeccable style and form, an understanding of the self and of culture (Baş, 2011; Karatay, 2011).

It is crucial to found the connections on solid ground in the event of dealing with the question of an East-West or classic-modern comparison. In this way, students would classify Orhan Gencebay under the classic-modern rubric, and be aware of the sources of the society in question and intellectual world as well as aesthetic pleasure (Aydemir, 2006). As a matter of fact, this kind of classification is derived from the effort to seek an answer to the question, "who am I?" The classical moves forward with the past and present simultaneously. The reader is obliged to assess the past based on the present, and interprets the past by means of filtering through his/her individual background and experiences (Genç, 2007; Polat, 2006; İspirli & Gülbahçe, 2009; Bilkan, 2006). From this point of view, the student perceives Fuzuli's love story based on concrete examples offered by Orhan Gencebay. Another type of perception proves difficult for the student owing to the vacuum between theory gathered from his/her educational background and practice in his/her life as well as the social/popular culture s/he internalized. In one of his studies, Şaban Sağlık (2004) categorizes the novelists as running both for and from life while respectively comparing the popular and aesthetic novels. Within this framework, when Fuzuli and Orhan Gencebay are compared, this sort of attitude amounts to experiencing life with all the imaginary and real dimensions.

The improvement of aesthetic taste, which occupies an important space in the teaching of classical culture, is connected to the teaching of language, thoughts and emotions. This type of teaching covers a long-term work, as it is grueling to adopt any phenomenon that does not live or has no place (?) in our lives. It is required to express a phenomenon in concrete and living terms in order to render it a part of our lives. Teaching of the classics is based on transfer, and therefore does not live. On the other hand, we are faced with Orhan Gencebay, who stands on the living side of this transfer. It is for this very reason that we can define Fuzuli's concept of love based on Orhan Gencebay.

It is necessary to teach aesthetics by concretizing it in the present day, in which visual learning stands at the forefront. Otherwise, learning is not materialized. Instruction should not be based on memorizing. Being analytical, inquisitive, and supporting personal development convey practical rather than theoretical knowledge, setting the framework for general knowledge. According to new approaches, it would be better to teach classics using examples from life; such as giving social, historical and cultural backgrounds which are reflected in these literary works in conjunction with various disciplines (Özcan, 2012; İsen Durmuş, 2011; Mengi, 2006; Günay, 2006). Some literary works are regarded as classics according to certain ideologies, and aesthetic criteria change; however, classical literary works, accepted as the building blocks of civilization, will always exist, preserving their quality of being a classic through their message, style, art and form. The fundamental question is how these works will be situated in our lives and gain a new meaning. Benefiting from cultural backgrounds, adapting it to the present, situating it within a context, visualizing the social relations, geography, the traditions and rules of the world presented in these works will assist in the circulation of the classic in present-day culture (Jago, 2004).

We are also of the opinion that Vygotsky's "semiotic mediation" concept can guide the reading and teaching of the classics. Vygotsky articulates that individuals can elude the suppressive influences of their community, and have a word, in time, on their own actions by means of "semiotic mediation". Individuals can organize their behavior with the help of cultural symbols working as semiotic mediators. Moreover, they pioneer for solving problems through activating their memory, situate cultural phenomena in order to shape their emotions and recollect their goals (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Holland & Lave, 2009, p. 5).

The students tried to set the boundaries for the classic and national culture with the worry of protecting their existence before Western civilization by utilizing the classics as a tool of semiotic mediator. The classics may be regarded as a point of departure when we put forward the East-West synthesis, experience the dilemma that we are Eastern or Western. Though it is not possible to convey Yahya Kemal's İstanbul to the present day, we can use it as a semiotic mediator for shaping the culture of our new city.

Putting an end to this dilemma, Italo Calvino (1999) states that everyone will have a library of his/her own one day, and benefit from the classics in terms of new discoveries, meanings in life (pp. 6-9). In this respect, the classics are critical for conserving the values and sources which culture feeds from, and shatter the monotony of popular culture. Ultimately it is the main goal to place the classic in life in a concrete way and bring a reading of the classics that embraces society as a whole.

Conclusion

It is not possible to establish a connection between past and present since consumption prevails in all fields in the liquid modernity we experience today (Bauman, 2006). Therefore, cultural symbols, serving as semiotic mediators, cannot stand still. This phenomenon invalidates traditions and values in time, obscures the role of the classics in the cultural dimension of education, and engenders monotony without aesthetics and intellectual depth.

In conjunction with the impact of visuality, the interaction of classical and popular culture has gained a new shape. The popular drags along the classic, and attempts to benefit from the aesthetic and artistic power of the classic. In contrast, the classic endeavors to establish a relationship with society on the basis of popularity (Fuery & Mansfield, 2000). As stated above, the classic is able to establish a relationship with society as long as it benefits from contemporary forms and values.

Within this framework, it appears quite natural that the students compared classical and modern culture within the context of an East-West consensus. Students wish to conserve the national culture and past of the classical culture and the progressive, individualistic and libertarian dimension of modern culture as modern culture expands the boundaries of classical culture's identity in the process. In addition, both cultures are needed in a world of liquidity. Nonetheless, how to fill in this identity remains ambiguous for the students.

For this reason, cultural symbols serving as semiotic mediators are required to be consciously placed (just as poetry, music, architecture, the novel) in the frame of classical culture, aesthetics and values in educational and social life. The classic can be updated and adopted in this way. The fact that Orhan Gencebay's love serves as the equivalent of love in Fuzuli's "Leyla and Mecnun," and the classic/modern dichotomy, and the failure to eliminate the vacuum between theoretical knowledge and practice all result from the non-existence of a concrete, functional and objective example today.

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