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**DISCURSIVE PRACTICES USED FOR
MANAGING CONFLICT IN TRAVEL
MEMOIRS**

ABSTRACT

Travel writing about intercultural interactions sheds light on the conflict faced by the author in a foreign environment. The conflict caused by differences of cultures and unfamiliar ways of living is an issue which the authors who produced works on travel writing experience and reflect on. In narratives, the use of specific discursive practices appear to function especially for managing such kinds of conflict. This paper focuses on the use of subversive humour and pathos in the travel memoir extracts of four Turkish women authors published in the memoir collection titled *Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women* (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022). Based on critical discourse analysis, evaluation of the intercultural encounters reflected by the four Turkish authors reveals that subversive humour and pathos are often jointly used not only as literary devices but also as discursive practices for managing conflict. Moreover, the analysis shows that these practices of managing conflict are used as a criticism device both in challenging communication incidents with members of a foreign culture and in the reflections on certain social occasions. The paper presents examples of the use of subversive humour and pathos for managing conflict under the themes of reflections on female identity, facing disappointment and appreciation of experiencing a new culture. It is recommended that travel memoirs should be studied for analysing other discursive practices used to cope with conflict.

Keywords: Conflict, discursive practice, subversive humour, pathos, travel writing.

**GEZİ ANILARINDA ÇATIŞMA YÖNETİMİ İÇİN
KULLANILAN SÖYLEMSEL UYGULAMALAR**

ÖZET

Kültürlerarası etkileşimleri konu alan gezi yazıları, yazarın yabancı bir ortamda karşılaştığı çatışmaya ışık tutmaktadır. Kültür farklılıklarının ve alışılmamış yaşam tarzlarının yol açtığı çatışma, gezi yazısı alanında eserler veren yazarların deneyimlediği ve üzerinde düşündüğü bir konudur. Anlatılarda, özellikle bu tür çatışmaların yönetilmesi ile ilgili belirli söylemsel uygulamaların işlev gördüğü görülmektedir. Bu çalışma, *Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women* (Lambert-Hurley vd., 2022) adlı eserde gezi anıları yayımlanmış olan dört Türk yazarın anlatılarındaki yıkıcı mizah ve duygulandırma kullanımını ele almıştır. Eleştirel söylem analizine göre Türk yazarların aktardığı kültürlerarası karşılaşmalara ilişkin yapılan değerlendirme, yıkıcı mizah ve duygulandırmanın yalnızca edebi araçlar olarak değil, aynı zamanda kültürlerarası çatışmayı yönetmeye yönelik söylemsel uygulamalar olarak sıklıkla birlikte kullanıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, yapılan analiz bu çatışma yönetimi uygulamalarının hem yabancı bir kültürün mensuplarıyla olan zorlayıcı etkileşimlerde, hem de belirli sosyal olaylarla ilgili aktarımlarda bir eleştiri aracı olarak kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Çalışmada, çatışmayı yönetmek için yıkıcı mizah ve duygulandırma kullanımına dair örnekler kadın kimliği üzerine düşünceler, hayal kırıklığı ile yüzleşme ve yeni bir kültürü deneyimleme zevki temaları altında sunulmuştur. Çatışmanın üstesinden gelmede kullanılan diğer söylemsel uygulamaların da gezi anılarında incelenmesi tavsiye edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Çatışma, söylemsel uygulama, yıkıcı mizah, duygulandırma, gezi yazısı.

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Introduction

Travel writing as a genre, especially travel literature on intercultural interactions, can be analysed in terms of the issues related to intercultural communication. Conflict is a concept which is investigated in the field of intercultural communication (Fisher-Yoshida, 2005; Jurtikova, 2013; Ting-Toomey, 2009). In intercultural encounters, conflict can arise mainly due to misunderstandings and intolerance towards cultural differences. When interlocutors come across a problematic communication incident or find it difficult to manage unfamiliar social occasions, they can use certain discursive practices to ease the situation. In this paper, the travel memoirs of four Turkish women authors published in the collection titled *Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women* (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022) are analysed. It is argued that subversive humour and pathos are two of the literary devices which appear to be frequently and jointly used as discursive practices to manage conflict. They are used in the experienced actual incidents reflected by the author as well as in the narrations on certain occasions which the author criticizes. These criticisms are either towards what the author finds strange and unacceptable about the foreign culture or about her own culture based on a comparison of the two cultures. Such kind of reflections can be seen as part of the transformative effect of conflict in intercultural encounters as claimed by Fisher-Yoshida (2005).

Humour and pathos have been studied in discourse analysis. In their study, Schnurr and Rowe (2008) analysed written humour used in the emails at the workplace. Their findings show that subversive humour, which includes irony, sarcasm, satire and parody, is an effective tool to be used by powerful people as well as those who are relatively powerless. The use of subversive humour is displayed in the emails as a means of challenging and resisting certain organisational practices. Similarly, Holmes (2000) claims that in unequal status interactions, subordinates can use humour to challenge power structures and to demolish authoritarian discourse. As Huber (2022) points out, there is a relation between coping with ambiguity and use of humour. It is stated that people overcome ambiguity by humour and by meaning production through reflection in a way that matches their desirable identities (Westwood & Johnston, as cited in Huber, 2022). Huber (2022) also suggests that power relations in interactions are transformed through the use of humour. It is an effective tool for enhancing social relations positively in the workplace (Holmes & Marra, 2002). The negative effects of conflict can also be diminished by the use of humour (Smith et al., 2000). In fictional narratives, subversive humour is frequently used (Mete, 2023).

Pathos, as Moorthy and Ghosal (2017) point out, is about the psychological connection between the speaker and the audience which leaves a long lasting influence. Expressing depression, appreciation and determination in a way that meets the expectations and needs of the audience are types of pathos (Wang, 2016). By achieving identification, pathos is used to persuade the audience by conveying understanding and addressing emotions (Burke, 1969). According to Higgins and Walker (2012), some cultural references in order to achieve such identification for persuasion include issues related to sport, health, hope, loyalty and friendship. In a study on political discourse and argumentative persuasion, Mshvenieradze (2013) found that emphasis on values was an example for the use of pathos by politicians. Ho (2016) found that hedges, engagement signs and mentioning oneself were often used in order to appeal to feelings in the genre of policy reform. Tracy (2002) states that one of the discourse practices used to persuade the listener is telling narratives. Narratives, or stories, have a “*vividness effect*” (Tracy, 2002, p. 158)

which make them easy to remember and also appealing to emotions. Hence, telling stories helps for achieving pathos. This paper argues that the authors' use of subversive humour and pathos in their memoir extracts appear to be the main discursive practices for managing conflict that they face in the new unfamiliar cultural environment.

Method

This study applies critical discourse analysis in order to examine the memoir extracts. As Bloor and Bloor (2007) argue, discourse is not only a product of human beings but also a means of re-constructing social actions and values. It is this dynamic nature of discourse which enables a critical analysis of texts with an attempt to question discourse processes and find out the source of social problems (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). According to Fairclough (1995), critical discourse analysis can contribute to developing a critical awareness of language, especially in its relation to issues of power including ideologies, values, social practices and identities. The memoir collection titled *Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women* (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022) includes forty-five memoir extracts written by women writers from different backgrounds. In this paper, memoir extracts written by four Turkish authors, Zeyneb Hanoum, Selma Ekrem, Şükufe Nihal Başar and Halide Edib, were selected to be analysed with an aim to find out whether there were common features in terms of the use of discursive practices for managing conflict. Subversive humour and pathos were identified as two discursive practices used by the writers in order to cope with conflict. Identification, analysis and reporting of recurring themes in textual data is one of the forms of qualitative analysis including discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Examples of narrative extracts in which subversive humour and pathos are jointly used by the Turkish authors in relation to conflict are presented under the themes of reflections on female identity, facing disappointment and appreciation of experiencing a new culture.

Analysis of the Memoir Extracts

I. Reflections on Female Identity

For the Turkish writers, the identity of being a woman in a foreign country causes not only feelings of empathy but also honest criticism towards different facets of womanhood expressed by subversive humour and pathos. After hearing the insulting and hateful comments from the male crowd towards the women speakers on the street defending the right to vote for women, Zeyneb Hanoum, who writes about her experiences in London during 1908-1909, feels pity for the British women. She comments on the incident by using subversive humour and saying that she “*would rather groan in bondage*” if that was what the British women had to tolerate in their struggle for freedom (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 226). The writer complains about the disillusionments which she believes are faced by both English and Turkish women. Her words contain both irony and pathos when she questions what the British women will actually accomplish when they get the right for vote other than becoming even more miserable and more exhausted on their face as well as getting totally “*disillusioned*” (p. 225).

Making comparisons and finding similarities between one's own culture and the host culture is reflected in the memoir extracts. Analogy is one of the literary devices used by the writers to compare what they see as unfamiliar with a familiar concept. Zeyneb Hanoum thinks that Ladies Club is a type of harem. Although she feels a kind of belonging to this new community of Ladies Club, she also expresses disappointment in her comparison of it to the Harem of the East. The

writer pities herself, and therefore uses pathos, by stating that she does not find a Ladies' Club a reward which is big enough for the hardship she experienced by being away from the harem. She goes on claiming that a club for ladies in England is one type of harem which, unlike the harem, is not mysterious and charming at all (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 225). Such kind of using cultural references is an effective tool for achieving pathos (Higgins & Walker, 2012). It can be claimed that the writer favours her identity of being a Turkish woman rather than a new member of a Ladies Club in Britain. This is also reflected in her words on the comparisons between the Turkish and English women and her eventual conclusion that she admires Turkish women among all the different nationalities of women that she met in other countries. Subversive humour is used in how the writer justifies her opinion when she says it is not because she is a woman from Turkey, but because of the fact that despite the slavery nature they have, Turkish women have succeeded in avoiding prejudice (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 227).

Reflections on female identity are also seen in Halide Edib's memoirs which contain the use of empathy for achieving pathos. In her observations on India in 1935, the writer comments on the privilege of being a woman by appealing to emotions and saying that regardless of their various loyalties, the women are much more capable of understanding each other in the whole world when compared to men (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 255). Although she has empathy with the women and young girls she meets, her reflections are mostly criticisms. She thinks that there is a great need for training Muslim women in India but feels angry about the fact that they show little interest about it. She gives a speech to the women audience about her thoughts but there is a lot more she cannot say explicitly which causes conflict for her. The people at the audience asks Halide Edib for her photograph and in her memoir she comments about this incident by using subversive humour and pathos as *"I gave them a special one with the grim look of a schoolteacher. I hope it continues telling them all that I could not say"* (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 255).

Şükufe Nihal Başar, in 1932, writes about her observations on Finland which she refers to as the *"land of poetry, civilization and humanity"* (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 248). During her visit, the writer observes that Finnish women do not prefer wearing make-up. She admires their *"simple, refined elegance"* and concludes as *"A long time ago, they moved away from these enhancements that don't add beauty to a woman. They've reached a level of higher values"* (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 246). Her persuasive remarks containing pathos about the beauty of women seem to be an implied criticism about the understanding of beauty and values by women back in her country. In her reflections which date back to early 1920s in America, Selma Ekrem reflects on her identity of being a Turkish woman when she talks about her longing for liberty. Although she sees her travel to America as a *"madness"*, when she thinks about the problems that she will face if she returns back home, she forgets her fears (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 233). She states that what encourages her is *"a thirst for liberty"* which she believed *"swept through America like the Great Mississippi"* (p. 233). The joy of experiencing America with the identity of a free woman, the identity she cannot experience in her country, appears to be a dominant feeling in her reflections.

II. Facing Disappointment

Facing disappointing issues, including disappointments on the unfamiliar culture's cuisine, can cause conflict in stays abroad. Subversive humour in the form of irony can be seen in Zeyneb Hanoum's comments related to the differences in food culture as *"But alas! the food in this harem*

has been a disappointment to me. Surely I must not accept this menu as a sample of what English food really is” (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 224). Selma Ekrem uses humour and pathos about the same topic, her disappointment about food, as “I marveled. Everything was strange to me. The soup that was sweet, the vegetables that seemed tasteless, a salad that was made of sweetest fruits spoiled with a dash of mayonnaise. What was I to have next” (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 237)? Memoir extracts of Halide Edib about the dirty conditions of the environment in Agra, India contain both subversive humour and pathos as a reflection of criticism (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022): “One entered Agra through miserable, dirty quarters. Such represent the worst part of the dying and stagnant East, no matter where they are found. No Eastern person will regret their passing away, though the Western writer in quest of the exotic may regret it. If native picturesqueness cannot be combined with a minimum of the decent conditions of life, let the picturesqueness pass away, and sooner the better” (p. 252).

Halide Edib’s expressions of depression, functioning as a type of pathos, continue with her criticisms about the East (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022). Pathos is also achieved by a persuasive style as:

God knows how much ignorance there is in the East about the bringing up of children. And here where I am speaking they could have day and evening classes for adult women. There were enough college-bred Muslem girls to under-take the teaching. ‘What do you mean,’ I thought, ‘by dressing so beautifully and sitting idle instead of helping, working, teaching. . . .’ And all this costly food. . . . Why, they could calculate the weekly cost, and spend it on providing meals for the poorer students of Jamia. (p. 254)

Facing stereotypes and prejudice appears to be another source of disappointment and conflict which the authors need to manage in their intercultural encounters. Selma Ekrem’s reflections (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022) on the dialogue between herself and the officials at the airport when she first arrived at America contain both subversive humour and pathos. She receives surprised remarks from the people that she looks more like an American rather than a Turk. Then, as she narrates, someone in the crowd looks very puzzled and asks Selma Ekrem where she got her clothes. The author’s reply is an example of subversive humour: “Strange as it may seem,” I answered, “we do not go round in my country wrapped in Turkish towels” (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 235).

Different from the other three writers, Şükufe Nihal Başar’s reflections on Finland in the memoir extracts include no negative remarks about the new, unfamiliar culture. Almost all of the writer’s observations contain admiration. Despite the positive reflections about what the writer sees and admires in Finland, her frequent remarks emphasizing what she does not observe and experience can be claimed to be showing a disappointment about her own country. Subversive humour and pathos can be seen in her words as “In the buildings, on the roads, in the faces of the people, in the clothes, in the stores, neither the gaudiness, the excess, the arrogance, the impertinence that comes with money, and ignorance, nor the darkness, dirtiness, irritability, and shabbiness born of poverty and sadness” (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 245). The conflict and disappointment caused by an implied comparison of the Finnish culture and her culture are managed by subversive humour and pathos.

III. Appreciation of Experiencing a New Culture

The following comments of Şükufe Nihal Başar contain pathos related to the surprise that the author experienced about the ways of living in Finland. The writer apparently appreciates the orderliness and cleanliness in a bazaar which is probably different from the typical bazaar scene in her own country (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022):

Women wearing white aprons with their heads wrapped in white are selling it. While everything exists at this bazaar, there isn't one bit of garbage on the floor. There are no bugs, no flies. The housewife, the worker, everyone coming to shop, even the poorest ones, are extremely clean. . . . There is no one you must avoid because they might brush against you. No one passes anyone by bumping into them or bothering them. There is no noise; it is a quiet, well-behaved movement. (p. 245)

Similar observations where there is hidden pathos about criticism towards her own culture as well as an appreciation of the way of living in Finland are also seen in other reflections of Şükufe Nihal Başar as “*A young girl comes to these restaurants, gardens by herself, drinks her beer, eats her food, opens her newspaper, her book, and no disrespectful look disturbs her*” (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 246). Admiration expressed with surprise and humour immediately accompanies pathos after her remarks about a child on the street who was polishing shoes as “*I couldn't believe my eyes; I went and stood in front of him. I stared in disbelief; I looked at him. He looked at me; I laughed; he too laughed; for one second, we laughed from heart to heart. . . . I asked myself: I wonder if he is a revue artist who made an effort to choose this spot for his act tonight* (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 246)?

Zeyneb Hanoum expresses her feelings on how she appreciates freedom by saying it was the first time in her life that she could look into space freely without veil and iron bars. She goes on stating that it had been worth what she had paid only to experience the happiness before a window without bars (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 224). Similarly, Selma Ekrem, referring to herself states that she travelled all the dangerous distance from Turkey to America only to be able to wear a hat freely (Lambert-Hurley et al., 2022, p. 233). Her remarks which include pathos show that the uncertainty about freedom of Turkish women at the time she travelled to America was the main reason of her leaving Turkey. The uncertainty of life in America, in contrast to the one she complains about in Turkey, seems to be part of the joy of freedom for her. She says she was escaping from uncertainty and goes on as “*What lay ahead of Turkish women, I could not fathom. And no more could I bear the struggle for liberty, the restrictions imposed on Turkish women. All my life had grown into struggle and sorrow, and one more struggle would break my spirit. I had rather face the uncertainty of America*” (p. 233).

Selma Ekrem also uses identification as a tool for achieving pathos (Burke, 1969) and points at the privilege of being a foreigner when she compares the exciting and adventurous unexpectedness of life in America with the well-known Thousand and One Nights Tales of the East. She says that this is an advantage which each foreigner has over an American who has the privilege of experiencing a land of wonders and who “*cannot realize that it is an American Thousand and One Nights Tales*” (Lambert-Hurley, 2022, p. 235). Even though the writer thinks that New York is a fairy land, she finds it difficult to keep pace with the people rushing from one place to another in the city. Pathos used to describe the hectic life routine in US is accompanied

by subversive humour in her remarks about the trolley and the ticket man in Turkey as “*Imagine a trolley packed like a sardine box, where people can neither move nor breathe ... How often I had felt like murdering the poor [ticket] man, especially if he had the misfortune of stepping on my toes*” (p. 237).

Halide Edib, in her memoir extracts on India, reflects on her gratefulness for the hospitality of people at a Muslim village. She says: “*It was enough to be a Muslem and believe in the One God. You were one of them. Never in my life had I such a clear perception of the freemasonic spirit of my religion*” (Lambert-Hurley, 2022, p. 257). Hospitality and religion are issues of shared cultural reference which the writer uses for identification and achieving pathos (Higgins & Walker, 2012). Her positive reflection is ironical in the sense that although sharing the same religion opens doors of all the houses for her as a welcomed stranger, being a Muslim is seen as a barrier on certain issues. The writer confesses she was very surprised to hear that one hundred and seventy Muslim women in Lahore became Christians in order to be subjects of the Christian inheritance law which allow women to inherit. She expresses the conflict she experiences with a criticism as “*Individuals should be free to change their faith if they find some other faith more congenial to their spiritual aspirations; but when this is done for material benefit it is ugly*” (Lambert-Hurley, 2022, p. 256).

Conclusion

As pointed out by Fisher-Yoshida (2005), conflict experienced in intercultural encounters can have a transformative effect. When the reflections in the memoir extracts of the Turkish authors are viewed from such perspective of transformation, it is seen that the authors make comments on the new surrounding based on a comparison of one’s own cultural norms and those of the foreign culture. Therefore, conflict is always inherent in the process of experiencing, understanding and adjusting to the new environment. The narration of explicit and implicit comparisons frequently include subversive humour and pathos which mainly function as discursive practices for managing conflict and criticizing. In the reflections of the writers, feelings of belonging are questioned while power structures are challenged. Subversive humour is displayed either by irony, sarcasm or satire; whereas pathos is achieved by appealing to the emotions of the reader in different ways. It is seen that these two discursive practices and literary devices are generally used jointly. They both appear in the narrations of specific problematic incidents experienced with an interlocutor and the authors’ reflections on social issues. In future studies, other discursive practices used in the narration of intercultural encounters and their functions should be analysed to have a better understanding of the processes involved in managing conflict.

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