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International Journal

of

English Language Studies

Volume: 4 Issue: 1 2025

e-ISSN: 2980-3330



<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/mcbuijels>

Manisa Celal Bayar University

International Journal of English Language Studies

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This journal is published electronically once a year.

e-ISSN: 2980-3330

Volume: 4 **Issue:** 1 - January, 2025

Address:

Manisa Celal Bayar University School of Foreign Languages, Şehzadeler – MANİSA / TÜRKİYE

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Bu dergi yılda bir kez elektronik ortamda yayımlanır.

e-ISSN: 2980-3330

Cilt: 4 **Sayı:** 1 - Ocak, 2025

Adres:

Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Şehzadeler – MANİSA / TÜRKİYE

İnternet Adresi

<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/mcbuijels>

E-Posta:

ijels@cbu.edu.tr

Abstracting & Indexing

EuroPub, Google Scholar, ResearchBib

CONTENTS / İÇİNDEKİLER

Manisa Celal Bayar University

International Journal of English Language Studies

Volume / Cilt: 4 Issue / Sayı: 1 January, 2025

Foreword

i

1. Turkish EFL Teachers' Beliefs, Practices and Challenges on Assessment

Ajda MUTLU

1-19

2. Female Body as the Mere Source of Animating Power in Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market

Sinem EKMEKÇİ

20-28

Foreword

It is with great pride and a sense of purpose that I present the latest issue of Manisa Celal Bayar University International Journal of English Language Studies. This journal continues to serve as a platform for fostering intellectual engagement and scholarly dialogue within the dynamic and ever-expanding field of English language studies. In a world where the role of language is becoming increasingly pivotal, we remain steadfast in our mission to support research that addresses the complexities of language acquisition, use, and pedagogy while embracing the diversity of voices within the academic community.

This publication is not only a reflection of the collaborative efforts of our authors, reviewers, and editorial team but also a testament to the vibrant exchange of ideas that drives progress in our discipline. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to the journal's growth and success, and I am confident that our continued efforts will enhance its standing as a valuable resource for researchers, educators, and practitioners alike.

Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Pınar GÜZEL GÜRBÜZ

Editor-in-Chief

Manisa Celal Bayar University International Journal of English Language Studies

Turkish EFL Teachers' Beliefs, Practices and Challenges on Assessment

Ajda MUTLU^a

Abstract

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore Turkish EFL teachers' assessment beliefs, assessment practices, and the challenges they encounter during the assessment process. In this mixed methods study, the data were collected on both a quantitative and qualitative basis. For the quantitative component, a random sampling method was used to collect data from English teachers through a questionnaire (n=257). For the qualitative component (n=25), the data were collected through interviews with English teachers. The findings revealed English teachers' assessment purposes, practices, use of technology, and the four skills assessment practices. In addition, the qualitative data revealed the barriers and difficulties teachers face in the assessment process, including students' low motivation, low language proficiency, being unready, and insufficient technology in the classrooms.

Keywords

English language teaching
Assessment beliefs
Assessment strategies

Cite as: Mutlu, A. (2025). Turkish EFL teachers' beliefs, practices and challenges on assessment. *Manisa Celal Bayar University International Journal of English Language Studies*, 4(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14767334>

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Introduction

Assessment in English teaching has always attracted the interest of researchers as teachers are constantly striving to improve methods and techniques for assessing student performance and providing feedback to enhance the learning and teaching process (Brown, 2004). Munoz et al. (2012) argued that language teachers' assessment practices are based on their assessment beliefs. It is important to examine teachers' beliefs to uncover the congruence or discrepancy between teachers' thoughts and actions in the classroom. Similarly, investigating English teachers' assessment beliefs may help teachers adjust their assessment methods in the classroom. In addition, Işık (2021) claimed that although assessment has attracted interest from researchers, assessment research is relatively scarce and insufficient to reveal the assessment practices of Turkish EFL teachers. Moreover, Ölmezer and Öztürk (2018) emphasized that teachers would evaluate their assessment methods through such research which might contribute to updating their assessment practices according to their student's needs. Therefore, this mixed methods study is expected to shed light on language teachers' beliefs, practices, and challenges in the field of language assessment. In addition, similar research may be valuable for providing data to educational institutions (e.g., K-12 levels) to help them revise assessment policies and encourage teachers to use effective assessment practices in their classrooms.

EFL teachers' assessment methods vary according to students' learning needs, school environment, and curriculum (Ezir, 2013). In Yetkin's (2015) classification, various assessment methods such as formative and summative, formal and informal, continuous and final, process-based and product-based, divergent and convergent, criterion-based and norm-based, discrete and comprehensive, objective and subjective were involved. However, since researchers have different classifications of assessment types, it might be concluded that the assessment methods used cannot be considered unique for each class and learner. Therefore, teachers must develop their assessment skills and adapt them to their teaching.

Four Skills Assessment in EFL Classrooms

Language assessment typically involves four skills assessment. These skills cover reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills assessment. Thus, it might be difficult for language teachers to assess all four skills. Since each skill requires a specific assessment approach, method, and strategy, teachers must decide how to select and apply different assessment tools, practices, and techniques in an educational setting (Öz, 2017). Yetkin (2018) pointed out that educational assessment systems only focus on certain characteristics of the four skills during the assessment process. Therefore, researchers have categorized the sub-skills as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Paker & Höl, 2012). According to Paker and Höl (2012), listening skills can be divided into sub-skills such as skimming, information transfer, dictation, and note-taking. On the other hand, reading skills include sub-skills such as skimming, information transfer, quoting, inference, and deductive information. Writing skills include sub-skills such as description, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, problem-solving and reasoning, and speaking skills are related to structural and functional use in Paker and Höl's (2012) classification.

Various methods have been employed by researchers for reading skills assessment. Brown (2004) argues that in order for students to fully grasp the content they are reading, they must possess a blend of syntactic knowledge, morphological knowledge, genre knowledge, and general word knowledge. Similarly, Hughes (2003) defines macro reading skills as the ability

to scan text for information, skim material for the main idea, identify the different stages of an argument, locate supporting evidence, determine pronoun referents, use context to understand unfamiliar words and recognize connections between elements. By considering these classifications, teachers can establish their own assessment criteria for assignments according to their understanding of both micro- and macro-skills in reading.

Among the four language skills, speaking skills are generally believed to be the most challenging language skill to be assessed. This is because it requires the careful monitoring and evaluation of oral performance. Brown (2004) classifies oral performance into five distinct categories as imitative speaking, intensive speaking, responsive speaking, interactive speaking, and extensive speaking. Hughes (2003) further explains that responsive speaking involves small talk, question-and-answer sessions, and giving directions, while interactive speaking includes discussions, role-plays, interviews, and games. In addition, researchers identified different criteria for speaking skills assessment. For instance, Louma (2004) emphasizes the importance of practicality, validity, reliability, and authenticity in speaking assessment. In addition, Hughes (2003) gives importance to various aspects such as accuracy, appropriateness, a diverse range of language usage, flexibility in starting and directing conversations, speaking time, pronunciation, grammatical correctness, vocabulary usage, fluency, and understanding.

Writing skills are another critical skill for language assessment. The researchers put forward various ideas regarding the assessment of writing skills (Hughes, 2003; Munoz et al., 2012; Weigle, 2002). Munoz et al. (2012) classified writing skills assessment into five forms: narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and argumentative. Weigle (2002) emphasizes the importance of content, rhetorical structure, organization, vocabulary, style, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and meaning accuracy during the assessment process. Similarly, Hughes (2003) points out the importance of assessing various sub-skills, including grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency, and form, when evaluating writing abilities. Taking into account the insights provided by these researchers, it can be concluded that English teachers must possess assessment knowledge to determine assessment criteria effectively and evaluate students' writing skills.

Listening skills assessment is also evaluated as a compelling task for English teachers (Richards, 1983). Richards (1983) categorizes listening subskills into two groups: micro skills and macro skills. These encompass a variety of activities such as tasks with limited responses, multiple-choice tasks, tasks requiring extended communication, tasks involving the recognition of paraphrases, listening to cloze test tasks, sentence repetition tasks, dictation tasks, and tasks requiring communicative responses.

The four skills assessments need to be followed through an effective feedback process provided by language teachers. The feedback process involves the comments and information provided to learners regarding their performance or lacking learning tasks or assessments (Richards & Schmidt, 2011). In addition to teachers' feedback process, self-assessment and peer assessment are considered integral components of the feedback process which develops students' ability to assess their work and that of their peers. Brown (2004) also highlights that the main objective of implementing self-and peer assessment is to assist students in acknowledging the disparity between their present performance and their desired performance, thereby fostering motivation. Therefore, the feedback process might be

considered one of the essential components of the language assessment process. (Cheng & Wang, 2017).

As it has been explained above, beliefs are described as mental representations of reality that encompass meanings, preferences, and beliefs, which in turn help individuals make sense of decisions (William & Thompson, 2007) This definition emphasizes the link between English teachers' assessment practices and their underlying beliefs. Research on assessment has been conducted both in Turkey and around the world. In his study, Öz (2017) investigated the assessment methods used by Turkish EFL teachers in the classroom, comparing factors such as gender, teaching experience, and school type. Another recent study by Ölmezer-Öztürk and Aydın (2019) focused on the knowledge of English teachers employed at universities regarding skill-based language assessment. The findings revealed that the overall language assessment score was moderate, with the lowest score observed in listening assessment knowledge. Similarly, Işık (2021) conducted a study examining English teachers' training in assessment and their assessment practices in the classroom. The results of this study confirmed that teachers' assessment practices are influenced by inadequate pre-service and in-service assessment training, as well as their previous experience in assessment.

The research conducted by Narathakoon et al. (2020) delved into the beliefs of English teachers regarding assessment in the English classroom, as well as their actual practices. The study revealed that various contextual factors, such as educational policies, time constraints, heavy workloads, and a lack of assessment knowledge among teachers, greatly influence their beliefs and practices. Similarly, Wicking (2017) explored English teachers' assessment purposes and discovered that the common goals include determining students' final grades, assessing their progress, and providing feedback. In a quantitative study by Cheng and Wang (2017), which focused on multiple assessments, teachers' beliefs and practices were examined, along with the challenges they experience. The study involved 520 primary school English teachers from Northern Taiwan through a questionnaire and open-ended questions and the results confirmed the effectiveness of formative and summative assessment. Lastly, Abu-Rahmah and Al-Humaidi (2012) proposed that self-assessment as an assessment strategy could enhance student involvement in the assessment process. Hakim (2015) conducted a study to investigate the impact of portfolio-based assessment on students and English teachers, specifically focusing on the wash-back effect. The findings proved that portfolio assessment positively influences the learning process through the wash-back effect.

Methodology

Research Design

As Cresswell (2007) stated, using a mixed-method approach increases the strength of the research conducted. Thus, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were incorporated in the study. The quantitative method which reveals statistical data about the variables was used to have more generalizable results as mentioned by Dawadi et al. (2021). Additionally, the qualitative method was preferred to get information about alternative assumptions and deductions. The qualitative part of the study involved a questionnaire which is used for gathering findings from a practical sample of a broader population (Babbie, 1990). As for the qualitative part of the study, a semi-structured interview which provides the researcher with deductive information about the studied research variables and themes was

preferred (Cresswell, 2007). The following questions involve the research questions of the current study.

- 1) What are the beliefs of Turkish EFL teachers regarding assessment purposes?
- 2) What are the methods, techniques, and frequencies that Turkish EFL teachers typically use for assessment?
- 3) What are the beliefs of Turkish EFL teachers regarding feedback and assessment?
- 4) What are the beliefs and methods of Turkish EFL teachers regarding the four skills assessment involved?
- 5) What are the challenges Turkish EFL teachers encountered during their assessment practices and the factors influencing their beliefs and practices for assessment?

Participants and Data Collection

A total of 257 English language teachers employed by the Turkish Ministry of Education were involved in the research. The participants' profiles differed in gender, age, educational background, undergraduate major, English teaching experience, and level of education as presented in Table 1. The quantitative data was gathered through a website dedicated to English teachers using a purposive sampling method because of COVID-19. The qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted either face-to-face or online meetings with 25 English teachers from the participants of the research.

Table 1. Teachers' Background Information (Frequencies, Percentages)

		Frequency	Percent
English Teaching Experience	1-5 years	32	12
	6-10 years	50	19
	11-20 years	134	52
	more than 20 years	41	16
	Total	257	100
The School Level	Primary School	28	10
	Secondary School	162	63
	High School	67	26
	Total	257	100
The School Type	Public School	249	96,9
	Private School	8	3,1
	Total	257	100,0
Age	21-30	39	15,2
	31-40	146	56,8
	41-50	65	25,3
	Above 51	7	2,7
	Total	257	100
Gender	Female	206	80,2
	Male	51	19,8
	Total	257	100
Educational Background	Undergraduate	189	73,5
	Master's Degree	67	26,1

	PhD	1	,4
	Total	257	100,0
Undergraduate Major	English Language Teaching	194	75,5
	English Language and Literature	43	16,7
	Linguistics	8	3,1
	Other	12	4,7
	Total	257	100,0

Instruments

The research involved a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The first research tool is the assessment belief questionnaire created by Elshawara et al. (2017). This questionnaire has 37 Likert scale items and 26 questions that require information about the teachers' opinions about assessment, grading, providing feedback, and reporting. The sample statements of the questionnaire involve;

Table 2. Assessment Beliefs Questionnaire (Likert Scale Items)

	SD	D	U	A	SA
Assessment helps teachers in grouping students for instructional purposes (2) *					
Assessment may provide information about students' progress (5) *					
Paper and pencil assessment is the best method in evaluating students' work. (13) *					
Formal assessment provides a good evaluation of students' work. (11) *					
Informal assessment provides a good evaluation of students' work. (12) *					

Note: Note: The number in the brackets with the asterisk (*) represents the item number in the questionnaire. SD= 'Strongly Disagree'; D= 'Disagree'; U= 'Undecided'; A= 'Agree'; SA='Strongly Agree';

Table 3. Assessment Beliefs Questionnaire (Opinion Statement Items)

	A	D
Reading is assessed through; read aloud (1) *		
Writing is assessed through; reflective writing (10) *		
Listening is assessed through; taking notes (24) *		
Speaking is assessed through; oral interview (3) *		

Note: "A" stands for Agree and "D" stands for Disagree.

The semi-structured interview involved 10 open-ended questions that were adapted from Dasthi's (2019) study. All the interview questions were parallel with the research questions. Twenty English teachers employed at different school levels in MoNE were interviewed via phone conversations, online meetings, or in-person meetings. Before conducting the interviews, three teachers were interviewed and their suggestions were used to ensure clarification-related improvements. The interviews lasted about fifteen minutes and they were recorded by the researcher.

The sample interview questions involve;

1. How do you assess your student's performance? Please describe the content of your exams.
2. How often do you assess your students in your class? Why?

3. Which skills do you assess? What kind of assessment is most effective for measuring students' performance in these skills?
4. What kind of feedback do you usually provide to your students? Could you please give me some examples of your feedback?

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Using descriptive statistics, the association between different variables in a sample or population was revealed. Additionally, English teachers' responses to the items in the questionnaire about their practices and beliefs were analyzed and descriptive graphs were employed. The qualitative data was manually transcribed by the researcher and content analysis was used. Bengtsson (2016) described the phases of content analysis as de-contextualization, re-contextualization, classification, and compilation.

The researcher utilized these steps during the content analysis. In order to extract meaningful units known as codes from the data during the de-contextualization step, the researcher first transcribed the data. Secondly, the codes and themes were controlled to check if all the aspects of the study were reflected. Themes were identified during the classification phase and assessed as a comprehensive idea of an underlying meaning at an interpretative latent level (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Thirdly, the researcher focused on the teachers' words during the compilation step, and the themes were displayed as quotes. Finally, the codes' frequencies were presented in the tables.

Results

The findings are organized according to the research questions. First, the results of the quantitative data are presented, followed by the qualitative data.

Turkish EFL Teachers' Beliefs About Assessment Purposes

The first research question seeks to answer English teachers' beliefs about the purposes of assessment. The data revealed that English teachers mostly based their assessment purposes (Table 4) on informing students about their progress and giving information about their instruction and teaching methods. In addition, English teachers mostly stated their assessment purposes as measuring achievement, providing feedback, and increasing students.

Table 4. Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of the Assessment Beliefs about the Instructional Assessment Purposes (n =257, Overall Mean =3.81 and SD=1.21)

No	Item	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	SD
		F(P)	F(P)	F(P)	F(P)	F(P)		
1	Assessment... may provide information about students' progress (5)*	23 (%8.9)	11 (%4.3)	17 (%6.6)	101 (%39.3)	105 (%40.9)	3.99	1.21
2	helps me to focus on teaching (1) *	27 (%10.5)	19 (%7.4)	25 (%9.7)	118 (%45.9)	68 (%26.5)	3.70	1.23

3	helps me to group students for instructional purposes (2) *	25 (%9.7)	20 (%7.8)	23 (%9.0)	136 (%52.9)	53 (%20.6)	3.67	1.17
4	can diagnose strengths and weaknesses in teaching (4) *	28 (%10.9)	9 (%3.5)	21 (%8.2)	110 (%42.8)	89 (%34.6)	3.87	1.24

Note: Note: The number in the brackets with the asterisk (*) represents the item number in the questionnaire. SD= 'Strongly Disagree'; D= 'Disagree'; U= 'Undecided'; A= 'Agree'; SA= 'Strongly Agree';

Turkish EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices about Methods and Techniques of Assessment

The third research question seeks English teachers' beliefs about methods and techniques of assessment. Although they were both highly preferred as assessment types (Table 5), informal assessment was more favoured by the teachers compared to formal assessment. Additionally, teachers were against the idea of the use of paper-pencil assessment. On the other hand, quantitative data revealed that teachers used written exams and quizzes which usually involved tests, completion tasks, and skill-based questions. Additionally, the grading methods of teachers (Table 6) were usually based on students' classroom participation, making presentations and projects, portfolios and homework. As the performers of the assessment, teachers stated that they usually used internet sources and cooperated with their colleagues and written sources respectively while preparing their assessment tools. Moreover, teachers believe that the feedback provided needs to involve giving verbal explanations along with using digital assessment tools. As for the feedback and process, teachers used both self-assessment and peer assessment equally in their classes. Lastly, the formative assessment had a higher level of agreement compared to summative assessment and teachers' assessment frequency varied according to the school types they worked at.

Table 5. Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of the Assessment Beliefs about Assessment Formats (n =257, Overall Mean = 3.49, SD=1.18)

No	Item	SD F(P)	D F(P)	U F(P)	A F(P)	SA F(P)	Mean	SD
1	Formal assessment provides a good evaluation of students' work. (11) *	27 (%10.5)	38 (%14.8)	36 (%14.0)	111 (%43.2)	45 (%17.5)	3.42	1.24
2	Assessment questions should reflect real life language use. (15) *	20 (%7.8)	17 (%6.6)	22 (%8.6)	110 (%42.8)	88 (%34.2)	3.89	1.18
3	Informal assessment provides a good evaluation of students' work. (12) *	18 (%7)	14 (%5.5)	24 (%9.3)	129 (%50.2)	72 (%28.0)	3.87	1.10

4	Paper and pencil assessment is the best method in evaluating students' work. (13) *	37 (%14.4)	84 (%32.7)	60 (%23.4)	50 (%19.5)	26 (%10.1)	2.78	1.21
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Note: The number in the brackets with the asterisk (*) represents the item number in the questionnaire. SD= 'Strongly Disagree'; D= 'Disagree'; U= 'Undecided'; A= 'Agree'; SA='Strongly Agree'; F='Frequency'; P = 'Percentage'

Table 6. Turkish EFL Teachers' Assessment Practices

Themes	Codes	Teachers' Opinions	f	%
Expression on using written exams and quizzes	-written exams	1,2,3,4,5,9,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,18,19,21,22,23	18	72
	-end of unit quizzes	1,2,3,4,7,23	6	24
Expression of the preferred content on exams	-four skill included	12,2	2	8
	-matching, multiple choice tests, fill in the blank parts, and reading a text	9,13,21	3	12
Expression on the content of grading	-term project	1,2	2	8
	-performance work	12,15,17,21,22	5	20
	-homework	6,8,14,15,22	5	20
Expression on the types of tasks and activities used	-classroom participation	2,8,13,14,15,16,17,22	8	32
	-role play activities	6, 21	2	8
	-playing games	6,8,21	3	12
	-portfolios	20	1	4
	--presentations	6,11,21,22	4	16
	-self assessment	6	1	4
	-preparing poster	7	1	4
Expression on the type of feedback provided	-commenting on students work	6	1	4
	-checking grammar& spelling mistakes	7	1	4
	-using online assessment tools	2,4	2	8
	-giving minus and plus	5	1	4

Turkish EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices about Feedback and Grading

In the second research question, the beliefs and practices of English teachers about grading and feedback are explored. Teachers don't have an agreement on the idea that students' grades should only depend on their exams (Table 7). On the other hand, EFL teachers agree on informing students about the assessment criteria before the exam and giving feedback in a short period. Additionally, teachers disagreed on the superiority of criterion-based assessment over norm-based assessment and the feedback types used involved positive and informal

feedback. The preparation of rubrics is primarily based on teachers' individual work or collaborative work with the other teachers.

Table 7. The Feedback Types English Teachers Provide to their Students

Themes	Codes	Opinions	f	%
Informal Feedback	Positive chatting with students	8,11,14,16,17,20,21,23	8	32
Formal Feedback	Exams, written comments	7,13,21,24	4	16
Formative Feedback	detailed explanation on learning deficiencies	19	1	4
Summative Feedback	worksheets, quizzes exams at the end of the units	1,21,25	3	12
Student peer feedback	Comments on their friends' assignment	6	1	4
Positive Feedback	Sayings like "Well done, good example", applaud, rewards, play games, giving pluses	1,2,5,10,11,14,15,18,20,21,22,25	12	48
Negative Feedback	Show their mistakes	8, 13, 24	3	12

Turkish EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices about Four Skills Assessment

The fourth research question addresses beliefs and practices related to the assessment of four skills. The four skills are evaluated in terms of traditional and alternative assessment methods.

For reading skills (Table 8), while the most frequently used methods involve true-false items, tests, and matching items as traditional methods, the alternative methods involve read-aloud, self-evaluation, portfolios, and peer assessment.

Table 8. Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of the Assessment Beliefs about Alternative Types of Reading Skill Assessment (n = 257; Overall Mean =0.22)

No	Item	D F(P)	A F(P)	Mea n	SD
	Reading is assessed through;				
1	read aloud (1) *	48 (%18.7)	209 (%81.3)	0.81	0.39
2	self-assessment (26) *	127 (%49.4)	130 (%50.6)	0.51	0.50
3	student portfolios (12) *	140 (%54.5)	117 (%45.5)	0.46	0,50
4	peer assessment (25) *	142 (%55.3)	115 (%44.7)	0.45	0.50
5	taking notes (24) *	159 (%61.9)	98 (%38.1)	0.38	0.49
6	role play (18) *	174 (%67.7)	83 (%32.3)	0.32	0.47
7	reflective writing (10) *	188 (%73.2)	69 (%26.8)	0.27	0.44
8	oral presentation (16) *	194 (%75.5)	63 (%24.5)	0.25	0.43

9	retelling a story after listening to a passage (23) *	193 (%75.1)	64 (%24.9)	0.25	0.43
10	oral summaries following a listening passage (22) *	193 (%75.1)	64 (%24.9)	0.25	0.43
11	oral discussion (19) *	198 (%77)	59 (%23)	0.23	0.42
12	essay writing (11) *	199 (%77.4)	58 (%22.6)	0.23	0.42
13	oral interview (3) *	212 (%82.5)	45 (%17.5)	0.18	0.38

Note: The number in the brackets with the asterisk (*) represents the item number in the questionnaire. D= 'Disagree' A= 'Agree'; F= 'Frequency'; P = 'Percentage'

For writing skills (Table 9), while the most commonly used methods are summarizing, sentence completion items, task edition, and recognition of errors, the alternative methods involve reflective writing, writing an essay, portfolios, and note taking.

Table 9. Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of the Assessment Beliefs about Alternative Types of Writing Skill Assessment (n = 257; Overall Mean =0.2)

No	Item	D F(P)	A F(P)	Mean	SD
Writing is assessed through;					
1	reflective writing (10) *	80 (%31.1)	177 (%68.9)	0.69	0.46
2	essay writing (11) *	86 (%33.5)	171 (%66.5)	0.67	0.47
3	student portfolios (12) *	90 (%35)	167 (%65)	0.65	0.48
4	taking notes (24) *	98 (%38.1)	159 (%61.9)	0.62	0.49
5	self-assessment (26) *	109 (%42.4)	148 (%57.6)	0.58	0.50
6	peer assessment (25) *	122 (%47.5)	135 (%52.5)	0.53	0.50
7	read aloud (1) *	191 (%74.3)	66 (%25.7)	0.26	0.44
8	retelling a story after listening to a passage (23) *	193 (%75.1)	64 (%24.9)	0.25	0.43
9	oral presentation (16) *	198 (%77)	59 (%23)	0.23	0.42
10	oral summaries following a listening passage (22) *	200 (%77.8)	57 (%22.2)	0.22	0.42
11	role play (18) *	200 (%77.8)	57 (%22.2)	0.22	0.42
12	oral discussion (19) *	208 (%80.9)	49 (%19.1)	0.19	0.39
13	oral interview (3) *	225 (%87.5)	32 (%12.5)	0.12	0.33

Note: The number in the brackets with the asterisk (*) represents the item number in the questionnaire. D= 'Disagree' A= 'Agree'; F= 'Frequency'; P = 'Percentage'

For listening skills (Table 10), half percent of teachers reported using true-false items, matching activities, and tests as traditional methods. As for the alternative methods, note-taking, oral summaries, and story narration were also preferred by less than half a percent of teachers.

Table 10. Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of the Assessment Beliefs about Alternative Types of Listening Skill Assessment (n = 257; Overall Mean =0,40)

No	Item	D F(P)	A F(P)	Mean	SD
Listening is assessed through;					

1	taking notes (24) *	136 (%52.9)	121 (%47.1)	0,47	0.50
2	oral summaries following a listening passage (22) *	137 (%53.3)	120 (%46.7)	0,47	0.50
3	retelling a story after listening to a passage (23) *	141 (%54.9)	116 (%45.1)	0,45	0.50
4	role play (18) *	147 (%57.2)	110 (%42.8)	0,43	0.50
5	self-assessment (26) *	150 (%58.4)	107 (%41.6)	0,42	0.49
6	oral presentation (16) *	155 (%60.3)	102 (%39.7)	0,40	0.49
7	oral discussion (19) *	155 (%60.3)	102 (%39.7)	0,40	0.49
8	peer assessment (25) *	157 (%61.1)	100 (%38.9)	0,39	0.49
9	oral interview (3) *	162 (%63)	95 (%37)	0,37	0.48
10	student portfolios (12) *	164 (%63.8)	93 (%36.2)	0,36	0.48
11	read aloud (1) *	181 (%70.4)	76 (%29.6)	0.30	0.46
12	reflective writing (10) *	210 (%81.7)	47 (%18.3)	0.18	0.39
13	essay writing (11) *	226 (%87.9)	31 (%12.1)	0.12	0.33

Note: The number in the brackets with the asterisk (*) represents the item number in the questionnaire. D= 'Disagree' A= 'Agree'; F= 'Frequency'; P = 'Percentage'

For speaking skills (Table 11), teachers had a low level of agreement on using task descriptions and information transfer as traditional methods. On the other hand, oral interviews, role play, and oral presentations were usually favored as alternative methods. Additionally, in light of the qualitative data, the most common methods used in four skills were revealed. For speaking skills oral presentation; for reading skills close tests and sentence completion; for writing skills doing homework; for listening skills listening texts are usually preferred by teachers. Moreover, grammar is assessed through sentence completion items, tests, and written exams while vocabulary is assessed with written exams and quizzes. When the frequency of assessment among the four skills is evaluated it is seen that reading skill is the most assessed skill followed by writing skills, speaking skills, and listening skills respectively. The four skills assessed are also followed by grammar and vocabulary knowledge assessment with a low percent of use.

Table 11. Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of the Assessment Beliefs about Alternative Types of Speaking Skill Assessment (n = 257; Overall Mean =0,53)

No	Item	D F(P)	A F(P)	Mean	SD
	Speaking is assessed through;				
1	oral interview (3) *	56 (%21.8)	201 (%78.2)	0.78	0.41
2	role play (18) *	73 (%28.4)	184 (%71.6)	0.72	0.45

3	oral presentation (16) *	86 (%33.5)	171 (%66.5)	0.67	0.47
4	oral discussion (19) *	90 (%35)	167 (%65)	0.65	0.48
5	public speaking (20) *	104 (%40.5)	153 (%59.5)	0.60	0.49
6	retelling a story after listening to a passage (23) *	125 (%48.6)	132 (%51.4)	0.51	0.50
7	oral summaries following a listening passage (22) *	131 (%51)	126 (%49)	0.49	0.50
8	self-assessment (26) *	155 (%60.3)	102 (%39.7)	0.40	0.49
9	peer assessment (25) *	155 (%60.3)	102 (%39.7)	0.40	0.49
10	read aloud (1) *	164 (%63.8)	93 (%36.2)	0.36	0.48
11	student portfolios (12) *	171 (%66.5)	86 (%33.5)	0.33	0.47
12	taking notes (24) *	195 (%75.9)	62 (%24.1)	0.24	0.43
13	reflective writing (10) *	228 (%88.7)	29 (%11.3)	0.11	0.32
14	essay writing (11) *	231 (%89.9)	26 (%10.1)	0.10	0.30

Note: The number in the brackets with the asterisk (*) represents the item number in the questionnaire. D= 'Disagree' A= 'Agree'; F= 'Frequency'; P = 'Percentage'

The Challenges Turkish EFL Teachers Experience During Their Assessment Practices in the Classroom

The fifth research question addresses the challenges English teachers face during the assessment process in the classroom. The challenges are evaluated as student-related challenges and external challenges. The student-based challenges involve students' lacking motivation, cheating in the exams, low proficiency levels, discipline problems, being unready for classes, material deficiency, and attendance problems. When the frequency of these problems is investigated it is seen that the most problematic ones are students' lacking motivation, low proficiency level, being unready for classes, and discipline problems respectively.

As for the external factors, technological deficiencies in classrooms, family interference, and lack of enough class hour time are identified as the most problematic issues. On the other hand, when teachers' and students' responses to these challenges are checked, it is observed that teachers struggle to increase students' motivation, change their assessment methods, and try to prevent cheating in the exams as a response to students-based challenges. As for the external challenges, teachers keep contact with the families, change their assessment methods, and use peer work activities for time deficiency. The qualitative data also provided information about the underlying factors behind English teachers' beliefs and practices through the assessment process. These factors involve the school types, education policy, students' language proficiency, technological limitations in the classroom, and their assessment knowledge.

Discussion and Conclusion

The discussion and conclusion part involve the discussion of the five research questions. Each research question is discussed based on both quantitative and qualitative data.

Turkish EFL Teachers' Purposes of Assessment

As the previous research supports, the purpose of assessment is to inform teachers about the student's progress, accomplishments, and limitations. (Harris & Brown, 2014; Munoz et.al.; Yetkin, 2015). Yetkin's (2015) research demonstrated that pre-service English teachers usually use classroom assessment to monitor their students' academic development and evaluate their

teaching methods. Similarly, Harris and Brown (2014) underlined the critical role of assessment in the teaching process and the value of teachers in identifying and resolving potential problems. The quantitative results of the current study point out that English teachers' purpose of assessment involves giving information about teachers' instruction and informing about students' progress in line with the previous studies (Dasthi, 2019; Munoz et al., 2012; Yetkin, 2015).

Turkish EFL Teachers' Assessment Methods and Techniques

The study results confirm that English teachers typically used various types of assessment methods such as formal, informal, summative, and formative assessment methods to encourage students' success. Previous researchers focused on different methods (Hakim, 2015; Öz, 2017). Hakim (2015) acknowledged that teachers must recognize both summative and formative assessment methods and use them in their classes effectively. Also, informal assessment was claimed to be more effective at evaluating students' progress, this would indicate that the teacher's priority was to spread the assessment process over a larger scope, including students' learning needs and deficiencies, rather than focusing on exams alone (Öz, 2017). On the other hand, in Brown's study, teachers preferred formative assessment tools to encourage students to participate in assessing their learning progress using alternative assessment methods. Ultimately, the methods and practices of teachers differ, which could lead to the belief that the methods' being efficacious is more important than the number or variety of them.

Along with the assessment types, the content of the assessment tools proves that English teachers employ multiple methods in the assessment process, including written exams, questions, projects, performance work, assignments, portfolios, self-assessments, and providing different types of feedback. The exam content includes multiple-choice questions based on the text, fill-in-the-blank questions, and reading texts. Öz (2017) also recorded that fill-in-the-blank questions, multiple choice questions, true-false questions, matching questions, and short answer questions were the most commonly used assessment methods by used by Turkish EFL teachers. In light of the previous research, it is observed that the methods EFL teachers use for the assessment process are changeable. (Öz, 2017; Ölmezer & Öztürk, 2019; Yetkin 2015).

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Turkish EFL Teachers' Assessment Methods and Techniques

The study results regarding the assessment beliefs and practices of English teachers on giving feedback and grading students', getting immediate feedback after the exams, and preparing a

marking scheme before giving their exams (Brown, 2004; Elshawara et al., 2017). Brown (2014) suggested that students' classroom participation, attendance, and improvement should be assessed through feedback which might increase the student's motivation and success. In parallel, the study reveals that teachers usually comment on the students' work after utilizing different types of assessment either as a group or individually, using terms like "Thank you, very good, okay, your idea is correct, my students can answer" which is a sign of positive feedback. Conversely, some teachers preferred negative feedback to emphasize students' errors (Al-Humaidi & Rahmah, 2012).

However, Harris and Brown (2014) suggested that the assessment process should no longer be only considered a testing process by teachers, but rather a necessary skill for improving students' self-regulation. Therefore, it can be seen that although self-assessment and peer assessment are pointed out as being very important, they have low performance in practice. While English teachers tend to use multiple types of feedback including positive feedback, informal feedback, and formal feedback, self-assessment and peer feedback are seen to be rarely used. This may be attributed to the teachers' negative beliefs towards these methods or their lack of knowledge on how to utilize them in the classroom effectively. As for the grading system along with the feedback process, English teachers believe that the final evaluation should include assignments, classroom performance, and written tests. However, English teachers' ideas in the current study differed regarding utilizing rubrics or establishing standards for evaluation. While approximately half of the teachers mentioned using self-created rubrics or rules, the other half preferred using The MoNE's rubrics and collaborative work. In addition, Nunan (2007) remarked on the necessary characteristics of a rubric as objectivity, covering all of the requirements and having a communicative basis for the assessment process in his study.

Turkish EFL Teachers' Four Skills Assessment Methods

In the study, reading was determined to be the most commonly assessed skill in four skills. The reading skills are followed by writing, speaking, listening, and writing skills. According to Ölmezer-Öztürk and Aydın (2019), this may be because reading skills are highly valued, teachers have more expertise and access to more resources, and students find it easier to assess reading skills. On the other hand, the four skills assessment was evaluated in terms of traditional and alternative assessment types. Brown and Abewickrama (2010) distinguished assessment types as traditional or alternative. The current study revealed that English teacher's practices and beliefs regarding the four skills assessment methods in terms of traditional and alternative methods were different. While this study identified true-false tasks, multiple-choice tasks, and matching items as the most commonly used traditional assessment methods, similar studies have found that read-aloud, self-assessments, and student portfolios are the most popular traditional assessment methods used for reading skills (Brown & Abewickrama, 2010; Elshawara et al., 2017).

When the assessment methods were investigated regarding listening skills, the most common traditional assessment methods involved true, false, and multiple choice items, taking notes, narratives, and recounting a story were highly preferred as an alternative method. For speaking skills, information transfer, error recognition, and dictation were typically employed as traditional methods. On the other hand, oral interviews, role plays, and spoken presentations were used by English teachers as alternative methods as in Elshawara et al.'s

(2017) study. As a result, it might be concluded that English teachers determine their assessment methods according to their assessment beliefs and practices.

The Challenges and The Influencing Factors on Turkish EFL Teachers during Their Assessment Practices

The difficulties English teachers encountered during the assessment process were students' low motivation, students' low proficiency, students' not being ready for classes, or technological issues in classes, all of which are considered to be challenges for them as in similar research (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). As a response to the mentioned challenges, English teachers struggle to endeavour to increase students' motivation, control cheating, alter the way they assess student performance, communicate with parents regarding behavioural issues, and collaborate with other teachers. As a result, it may be possible to deduce that the English teachers' sources of difficulty are diverse due to the different teaching environments and the struggle to achieve their goals as teachers. On the other hand, The study results showed that English teachers' assessments of students and their practices are also influenced by factors such as the type of school and teachers' lack of knowledge regarding assessment.

The current study results revealed that English students expressed their lack of knowledge regarding the assessment process and their need for additional training on assessment. This outcome was backed by the previous research on teacher's assessment knowledge (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2019; Yetkin, 2015). The findings positively indicated that teachers were aware of their inadequacy and wanted to improve their performance on assessment knowledge. In addition to stating their training need on assessment, about one-third of the English teachers mentioned that MoNE's policy regarding assessment was a significant part of their practice of assessment and criticized the educational policy for not taking advantage of the various methods and practices of assessment in their classroom in the current study. However, the reform of the curriculum assessment strategy takes into account the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (CEFR), which promotes a variety of assessment methods, including self-assessment, formal assessment, questioning, written and oral examinations, projects and assignments completed during the academic year. Despite the suggestion of taking advantage of different assessment methods, teachers perceive educational policy and central exams as barriers to their assessment practices. In contrast, Paker and Höl (2012) pointed out that despite curriculum changes, the assessment of oral performance has been compromised and remains a concern for learners which is also confirmed by the current study results. In addition, Good and Brophy (2000) also pointed out that English teachers, as observers of students' classroom performance, policymakers do not prioritize their assessment concerns and decisions. As a result, it may be deduced that as English teachers' assessment practices are mostly shaped by the curriculum and the placement exams, there needs to be conformity between language teachers' and policymakers' expectations to ensure students' learning and success.

Implications

As explained before, the study aimed to investigate Turkish EFL teachers' assessment beliefs, practices, and challenges. There have been a variety of research studies in the literature. However, these studies have mostly been conducted with pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey. Thus, this study might be valuable in revealing insights into Turkish EFL teachers employed at the Turkish Ministry of Education. That's why, increasing the number of parallel research

might help English teachers gain awareness about their assessment practices and improve their assessment skills. On the other hand, the results of such research might also reveal information about English teachers' possible training needs on assessment practices and contribute to teachers' professional development. As it is known, this study benefited from a questionnaire a research tool. In addition to the questionnaire, a scale might be developed about the assessment practices of Turkish FLE teachers to ensure a higher level of reliability. The current study is limited to 257 English teachers. The number might be increased in future studies. Moreover, different research designs such as experimental studies might be conducted to observe the outcomes of the applied assessment methods. Additionally, classroom observations might be involved to have a closer view regarding teachers' assessment practices. Lastly, English teachers might be supported through in-service training on assessment practices.

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Female Body as the Mere Source of Animating Power in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

Sinem EKMEKÇİ^a

Abstract

Poetry transforms into a safe harbour to address sensitive socio-cultural issues during the Victorian period. Having grown weary of being trapped within the categories set by the male-dominant world, the Victorian women poets pioneer to fulfil their potential. They subvert male domination simply by addressing the patriarchal systems that shape gender dynamics in their writings. Therefore, writing is not only a resistance to this hegemony but also an animating power for women to reconstruct their identities. The purpose of this study is to illustrate how sisterhood adopts a hardline stance against patriarchy's persistent dominance in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market." Rossetti's depiction of male dominance as a marketplace where women are decreased to goods to be exchanged can be characterised as an act of inspirational rebellion. "Goblin Market" is a groundbreaking piece of Victorian poetry in the sense that it pioneers new ways of subverting male supremacy and opens up ways for women writers to use poetry as an animating power.

Keywords

Victorian Women Poets
Body politics
Female body power

Cite as: Ekmekçi, S. (2025). Female body as the mere source of animating power in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*. *Manisa Celal Bayar University International Journal of English Language Studies*, 4(1), 20-28.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14767245>

Introduction

The Victorian era is a period of innovations and advances in many fields of social areas including literature, art, and politics. With the rise of the Industrial Revolution, the British Empire reached its peak, becoming the most powerful nation in the world. With its developing economy, labour demand arose in the British market. While there were many opportunities opened up for men, only a small percentage of women could find a job to earn their lives. There were limited spheres of work for women including governess, nursing, laundry work, or domestic service. Additionally, the traditional gender roles promoted men as the provider and women as the caretaker. Women were considered 'the angel in the house,' whose only duty was to take good care of their household, do the domestic chores, and run the house. Virginia Woolf gives a detailed description of a woman's angelic image in the eyes of Victorian society in her prominent work *Profession for Women* (1993) as it follows:

I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short, she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all – I need not say it – she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty – her blushes, her great grace. In those days –the last of Queen Victoria – every house had its angel. (p. 275)

Woolf criticises the fact that a woman is expected to sacrifice herself to be able to fit in society. It is such a pity that every house had its angel, which means women were the ones in houses who were expected to sacrifice their freedom, their independence, and hence, their identity. These stereotypes were tailored in such a way that they permeated society through a variety of ways. Books played an important role in imposing those patriarchal ideologies upon women. Being amongst the most enlightening and eye-opening works of the period, Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1997) depicts the lives of those angelic women as a prison as it follows:

In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since her pin money, which depended on the goodwill of her father, was only enough to keep her clothed. (p. 58).

As stated in the quote above, having a space of her own was out of the question for women. Just as women were restricted within the walls, their capabilities were also kept within the bounds of their houses.

The Victorian era marks a period in which women were weakened and even disabled to perform their abilities except for becoming a wife or mother. As Gilbert and Gubar also state in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, it is "debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters" (2020, p. 53). Women who act against society's codes or etiquette are ostracised either because they are considered mad, or immoral. The madwoman image is first generated by Gilbert and Gubar based upon the madwoman character Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's prominent novel *Jane Eyre*. They

use the term to define any marginalised woman who challenges the ideal woman image in the Victorian era. As stated in *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, the madwoman in the attic should be “read as the unconscious articulation of the hidden fears of patriarchy and as the protest of the feminine subject against her exclusion and monstrous distortion” (Rice & Waugh, 2001, p. 145). The idea of madness, as Gilbert and Gubar (2020) suggest in their work, can be regarded as a constructive state in which one can reveal their true self.

Writing can also be regarded as a liberating practice for Victorian women. As also stated in “Marianne’s Body Politics in Angela Carter’s *Heroes and Villains*,” in a world where “women are excluded from the privileges of body politics which are only granted to men,” with the act of writing women “recreate politics of their own” (Ekmeççi, 2021, p. 270). During the Victorian period, writing was mostly associated with men and women who were involved in writing were considered daring. Many women including Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) and the Brontë sisters wrote under the name of a male pen so that their works should not be looked at as biased. There were only a few women poets during the Victorian period. This study, thus, aims to scrutinise writing poetry as having the function of creating a space to escape from the societal convictions for Victorian women.

Writing poetry is regarded in this study as a liberating, transforming, and life-giving experience for Victorian women poets. It is also within the aims of this study to cast light on how Victorian women poets, who reject being imprisoned within the categories and constraints set by society, rebuild their female identities by writing poetry. In the study, Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* is scrutinised to demonstrate how poetry functions as building a female identity by being the voice of Victorian women and awakening them to a deeper understanding. The poem is also noteworthy in a way that it pioneers a change in women’s expressing themselves in poetry, which was then regarded as an entirely male profession. The role of poetry readers in breaking this stagnant thought is indisputable. John Ciardi highlights the significance of readers as well as poets in poetry’s gaining its overall meaning in his work *How Does a Poem Mean?* (1975) as follows: “Reading a poem is an act of participation in the poem. By participating, the reader not only makes the performance whole but makes it, in one essential sense, uniquely his” (1975, p. 12). Thus, Victorian women poets not only revolutionised the way poetry was associated with man exclusively but also created an impact in a broader sense with their poetry resonating with the readers. Poets like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Augusta Webster, and Felicia Hemans blazed the trail for the poems which contributed to the construction of female identities by subverting male domination. These women poets also revolutionised the way poetry was categorised, by directly being the precursors of following generations of women poets.

The Body as Text: Theoretical Insights into Crafting Female Identity from the Legacy of “The Second Sex”

Women have always been ascribed certain traditional roles by the patriarchy and have been disabled from performing their full potential. Some gender roles that are only ascribed to men and women are reduced to certain stereotypes. One of these stereotypes during the Victorian period is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that writing is a male-only profession. This stereotype reinforces the sense of social inequality, banning writing from being an accessible career for women. Having already been disheartened by this ideology, women also face many difficulties in the field, struggling with feelings of insecurity about writing. Gilbert and Gubar refer to Bloom’s ‘anxiety of influence’ regarding entirely male Western history in their *The*

Madwoman in the Attic and state that women writers and poets suffer from anxiety of authorship since they “must confront precursors who are almost exclusively male” (2020, p. 48). Having no female precursors leads women writers and poets to “a radical fear” that “the act of writing will isolate or destroy” them (p. 49).

Another way of limiting women from realizing their potential, according to Simone de Beauvoir, is fabricating gender myths. In her work, *The Second Sex* (1949), de Beauvoir scrutinises the woman myth and draws attention to how women are reduced to certain gender roles by patriarchy with the help of fabricated gender myths. Beauvoir states that “woman is other than man” and is regarded as an object (2001, p. 1407). This social construct is simply created by patriarchal structures to limit women's roles in society to be able to maintain their hegemony. They build their selves and reinforce their authority by positioning women into certain roles and defining them as the other. The woman myth, according to Beauvoir, serves for patriarchy to justify “all privileges and even” to authorise “their abuse” (p. 1409). Therefore, femininity “is a false entity;” it is a sham; a mere fabrication that is constructed by patriarchy to make women the second sex (p. 1407). Myriad dynamics play an important role in the construction of female identity. Thus, this is a journey in which one becomes a woman.

Writing is a revolutionary act for Victorian women writers and poets since this is the only way for them to transcend the boundaries set before them. According to Kari Weil, “Women’s desire is what is most oppressed and repressed by patriarchy, and what most needs to find expression” (2006, p.153). One way of expressing their repressed desires is writing, which is, according to Hélène Cixous, “the fastest and most efficient vehicle for thought” (1994, p. xxii). Although Cixous declares that she is not a feminist, she is mostly associated with French feminism whose pivotal concern is to draw a parallel between writing and the female body. According to Cixous, the function of writing is that it “offers a ‘passageway’ to a new relation between self and other in which both coexist and she outlines her vision of a feminine writing” (1994, p. 40). Thus, writing can be considered a pilgrimage, a quest within, through which women construct their identities. In her article titled *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous states

To write. An act which will not only ‘realize’ the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal (2001, p. 2044)

Women regain their desires, pleasures, bodily territories, and their identities by inscribing their bodies to the texts. Writing is an act of empowering women, which also performs the function of subverting male domination. By writing, women share their stories along with their joys and pains. Rita Felski highlights the importance of female texts in her *Literature After Feminism* as follows: “An encounter with a female text is like having an intimate and pleasurable conversation with another woman” (2003, p. 39). As stated by Felski, women benefit from one another’s stories in which “women share a common psychology and a common identity” (p. 40). Those stories have healing power for women who are not only imprisoned physically but also mentally. *Écriture féminine*, which gained popularity among French feminists, is concerned about feminine writing. What *écriture féminine* suggests is that women should inscribe their bodies in their writings which have common traumatic stories. Sharing helps them to overcome their traumas and break both their bodily and mental boundaries. Victorian women writers and poets, who made a complete revolution in the

expression of women's thoughts and feelings, played a significant role in the development of feminism and the construction of female identity by liberating their imprisoned thoughts and feelings.

Female Body as the Mere Source of Animating Power in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

Although poetry is a very old form of art, there were not many precursors of women poets when its history was taken into account. Nineteenth-century marks a period in which both women writers and women poets gained popularity. However, nineteenth-century women's poetry seems to be quite underestimated, though, when compared to the novel genre. In her work titled *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart*, Angela Leighton calls attention to the fact that "women's poetry of the nineteenth century, much more than the novel, was written and read as part of a self-consciously female tradition" (1992, p. 1). One reason why Victorian women poets are neglected by feminist critics could be, as Leighton further suggests, that

the hidden consequence of such pioneer studies as Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1963), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) and Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) was to establish a canon of women's writing which is predominantly [...] that of the novel. (p.1)

Most of these works scrutinise the characters in popular novels which leads to the unintentional overshadowing of the poetry as genre. Nevertheless, poetry was safer than novels in terms of addressing the issues women faced without taking much risk.

Women poets in the nineteenth century used their poems as a tool of subverting male domination. In the first place, they deconstruct the idea of poetry belonging exclusively to men. They also raise awareness in society by raising their voice as women. At the centre of Christina Rossetti's poetry is a woman. She rejects the conventional codes of society that are imposed upon Victorian women and refuses the societal classification of women. As also stated by Karen Alkalay-Gut in her article "Aesthetic and Decadent Poetry," Rossetti "asserts a woman's individual identity by refusing to conform to the conventional rituals of courtship, engagement, and marriage" (2000, p. 236). In her poem *Goblin Market*, Rossetti skilfully depicts the Victorian approach towards women who are always considered to be submissive and open to being deceived. The market depicted in the poem is full of goblins that try to hunt women with irresistibly delicious-looking fruit:

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy" (1-4)

The marketplace where maids go shopping is full of tempting fruit. Goblins are merchants that try to sell all sorts of exotic fruit including "[a]pples and quinces, [l]emons and oranges, [p]lump unpeck'd cherries, [m]elons and raspberries, [b]loom-down-cheek'd peaches, [s]wart-headed mulberries" to their customers who are just maids in the poem (5-10). It is as if it is not the fruit that is marketed here; yet, the maids who are being exchanged. As Leighton states in *Victorian Women Poets*, "the fruit is not only evil but also beautiful; the goblins are not only devils but also men, brothers or delightful animals; fallen women are not only streetwalkers and sinners but also loving sisters" (1992, p. 137). The poem is about two sisters, Laura and

Lizzie, who go to the Goblin Market to satisfy their curiosity. Goblins try to seduce the two sisters saying that their “grapes fresh from the vine” and they should taste the figs “to fill [their] mouth” (28) and their “[c]itrons from the South” (29) that are “sweet to tongue and sound to eye” (30). How can a woman remain pure among all the delicious fruit? The seducers are portrayed as goblin men and the ones who have tendencies to be seduced, to be lured are portrayed as women.

Rossetti uses exotic fruit as a tempting offer for the maids, which can be considered to have a direct reference to the original sin that causes both Adam and Eve to be expelled from the Garden of Eden due to their disobedience to God regarding the forbidden fruit. Rossetti criticises not only society’s pressure on women but also the way women are reflected in literature. Most of the literature consists of traditional roles suggesting women how to be ‘angels’ at home or what to do not to become a fallen woman by telling the stories of fallen women. According to Felski, Victorian literature consists of codes of etiquette that suggest tailored gender roles for women. As she puts it in her work *Literature After Feminism*, “[b]ooks fulfilled a variety of roles for women in Victorian England. They were often turned to for guidance, as valuable sources of moral advice and religious instruction” (2003, p. 30). Literature functions as imposing patriarchal ideology on women, who are already imprisoned within the walls of their houses. The house is the safest place for a woman to protect her chastity. On the contrary, the outside is full of danger and seductive men who would seduce women and cause them to lose their innocence. Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* (2008) represents an unsafe place for women- a place out of their houses where they can lose their chastity.

The two sisters, Lizzie and Laura, exert the utmost effort not to be tempted by goblin men in the market. Even their bodies reflect the stress they are under as they know they are in danger. They walk “[w]ith clasping arms and cautioning lips” and “[w]ith tingling cheeks and fingertips” (38-39). They both need to be cautious not to lose self-control. Although Laura warns Lizzie not to “look at goblin men” and “buy their fruits,” her curiosity gets the better of her (42-43). Although curiosity has always been regarded as a very dangerous passion for women since Pandora opened up the box that is believed to have brought curses upon mankind, it, indeed, serves for reconciliation for the repressed desires of women. Being mesmerised by the mouth-watering fruit, Laura desires to taste the fruit globes. However, she cannot afford to buy fruit. The two sly goblin brothers persuade Laura to cut a golden curl from her hair to be able to exchange the fruit:

“You have much gold upon your head,”
They answer’d all together:
“Buy from us with a golden curl.”
She clipp’d a precious golden lock,
She dropp’d a tear more rare than pearl,
Then suck’d their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flow’d that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She suck’d and suck’d and suck’d the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She suck’d until her lips were sore (123-136)

The golden lock represents innocence and virginity, as well as the sacrifice Laura gives in return for this bodily experience. She pays for quenching her curiosity with her bodily sacrifice. No matter how many times Lizzie tells Laura not to "loiter in the glen, in the haunts of goblin men" (145-6), Laura decides to go there again since she has eaten her "fill, yet [her] mouth waters still" (166). Lizzie is concerned that Laura's curiosity will bring her regret in the end, dragging her into a mistake. She warns her reminding her of Jeanie who "met [goblin men] in the moonlight, [t]ook their gifts both choice and many, [a]te their fruits and wore their flowers" and of how she ends up in the end (148-50). Lizzie's anxiety regarding her sister's dangerous acts reflects the attitude of Victorian society towards curiosity. Laura, on the contrary, represents the curious and enthusiastic woman who is definitely not favoured by society as she tends to make mistakes. While Lizzie is "most placid in her look," Laura is "most like a leaping flame" (217-18).

Laura, having tasted once all the delicious fruit the Goblin men sell, is now held back from tasting them ever again by her sister's warnings. She suffers "[i]n sullen silence of exceeding pain" (271) with the thought of not being able to buy "such dainty fruit" again (257). Having seen her sister's decline, Lizzie is terrified to see her sister's "knocking at Death's door" (321). She decides to "buy fruit to comfort" (310) Laura and puts "a silver penny in her purse" to buy some fruit from the Goblin Market (324). According to Jill Rappoport, Lizzie's silver penny represents her power. As Rappoport puts it in her article "The Price of Redemption in the 'Goblin Market,'" "Lizzie's coin insures her against market forces, protecting her to take on the role of rescuer rather than victim" (2010, p. 861). She rescues her sister by resisting the offers of the goblin men in the market. The goblin men do not accept to give her fruit even though she has tossed them her silver penny. They insist Lizzie to "sit down and feast with" them (380). Being rejected by Lizzie, goblin men who once have sweet voices turn out to be evil creatures, "[b]arking, mewling, hissing, [and] mocking" Lizzie (403). They tear Lizzie's gown and twitch "her hair out by the roots" (404). Although goblins harm Lizzie's body by "scratch[ing] her, pinch[ing] her black as ink, kick[ing] and knock[ing] her," she does not even open her mouth to say something so as not to taste their fruit (427-28). Lizzie's struggle with the goblin men for the sake of saving her sister, Laura, represents woman power in subverting male domination. She defies male authority by resisting goblin men and not eating the fruit which they try to "cram a mouthful in" her mouth (432). She not only resists them in a way that she is not seduced by their tempting words, but also shows bodily resistance despite the force they impose upon her body. She runs home and calls her sister Laura:

Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeez'd from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men.
(465-74)

Lizzie's confrontation with the goblins results in damage to her body. The bruises on her body represent the traces of hegemonic power over woman body. However, both male power and hegemonic ideological power imposed upon her body are subverted by Lizzie's using her body as the source of animating power to bring her sister to life again. Lizzie has to sacrifice her body to bring Laura back to life. She carries the pulp of the forbidden fruit on her body to be able to give it to her sister. Rossetti highlights the importance of sisterhood both in the construction of female identity and the subversion of male domination. Moreover, she emphasises the power of the female body as opposed to patriarchy's power over women. In *The Goblin Market*, Rossetti not only criticises the approach towards women in Victorian society but also subverts male domination and deconstructs the male power by using the woman body as the mere source of animating power.

Conclusion

Victorian Era sets the tone for the start of a long-lasting struggle that seeks to dismantle gender stereotypes which have been imposed on women by patriarchy throughout history. Writing, which is considered a male-only profession till then, plays a crucial role in liberating women from the rigid categories of the male-dominated world. Since writing became a precarious act of resistance to societal and institutional norms and codes, especially during the Decadence, poetry is considered a safer domain not only for men but also for women. Victorian women poets pioneered using their pens to challenge the hegemonic structures, which opened up ways and inspired many women successors to craft their identity from the patriarchy's legacy. In this sense, Christina Rossetti's *The Goblin Market* ridicules male hegemony by openly pointing out the issue that what they have established for centuries is an ideological market where women are devalued and marginalised for the sake of maintaining power.

In *The Goblin Market*, Rossetti criticises the male systems which maintain their control over women. This market is established to maintain its order by luring women into buying all sorts of exotic fruit in return for either their money or bodily sacrifices. The poem mirrors how women are viewed as beings who are unable to resist temptation and control their impulses. In this ruthless system, women are left with no choice but to compromise themselves. Rossetti ridicules men by portraying them as goblins which embody wickedness and abusiveness in her poetry. She also highlights the importance of sisterhood in this evil system to survive and maintain their existence regardless of the innocence they lose and the sacrifices they have to make. Lizzie's confrontation with the goblins for the sake of reviving her sister Laura at her deathbed represents the power of sisterhood. Lizzie's using her body as an animating power embodies the women power. Rossetti's *The Goblin Market* encourages women to resist male oppression and highlights the significance of sisterhood to survive in this hegemonic system.

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