

CONSTRUCTING THE IDENTITY OF AN EXPERT ADVICER IN TURKISH NEWSPAPER AGONY AUNT'S COLUMN

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Abstract: Advice letters written by the agony aunt include complex set of activities like 'assessing, judging and directing' through which the agony aunt represents an identity to the problem-seekers and the readers following her column to gain acceptance or to prolong that acceptance. The current study attempts to find out how the Turkish agony aunt presents herself to Turkish public in general and to the problem seekers following her column in particular. The data is retrived from an online newspaper site and six discursive strategies are adapted from Locher's (2006) advicer identity study. The results of the study indicate that Turkish identity is different in relation to American advicer identity by certain aspects. One of the striking differences in the employment of advice is that while Turkish advicer does not prefer to use humor when replying to the problem-seekers, American adviser uses humor.

Key words: advice letters, advicer identity, discursive moves, relational categories, advice, humour
**Türk Gazete Köşesinde Öğüt Veren Uzman Kişi Olarak Güzin Abla
Kimliğinin İnşası**

Öz: Güzin abla tarafından yazılan öğüt mektupları sorunlarına çözüm arayan okurlar ve bu köşeyi takip eden okuyuculardan kabul görmek ve bu kabulü devam ettirmek için Güzin abla kimliğinin temsil edildiği 'değerlendirme, yargulama ve yönlendirme' gibi birtakım karmaşık aktiviteleri içerir. Bu çalışma, Güzin ablanın genel anlamda Türk kamuoyuna ve özel olarak ise öğüt köşesini takip eden danışmanlara kendini nasıl ifade ettiğini bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Veriler çerçirimiçi yayınlanan bir gazeteden alınmıştır ve altı söylemsel strateji Locher'ın (2006) öğüt veren uzman kimliği çalışmasından uyarlanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, Türk kimliğinin bazı yönlerden Amerikalı öğüt veren danışman kimliğine göre farklılıklar gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Öğüt verme pratiklerindeki çarpıcı farklılıklardan biri, Türk öğüt veren danışmanın sorunlarına çözüm arayanlara cevap verirken mizahı tercih etmemesine karşın, Amerikalı danışmanın mizahı tercih etmesidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öğüt mektupları, öğüt veren kimliği, söylemsel adımlar, ilişkisel kategoriler, öğüt, mizah

Introduction

This study is conducted to explore how Turkish agony aunt constructs and presents an agony aunt identity to the problem-seekers requesting for help in an online column in Turkish newspaper. Getting advice gives the advice-seeker the chance to understand not only how the other person he seeks advice from makes cognitive reasoning, but also how he solves the problem of the advice-seeker in advance (Bayraktaroğlu, 2001). Many complex activities such as 'assessing, judging, directing' (Locher, 2013, p.340), logical reasoning and even arguing (Bayraktaroğlu, 2001) takes place when giving advice. According to Locher advice-giving also, refers to a future action (Locher, 2013, p.340)(House & Kadar, 2021) . Another side of the coin is that not all advice is accepted

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in every culture. In some cultures (e.g., Japan, Korea, China, Indonesia, Turkey and Arabic countries) (Hinkel, 1994, 1997) advice is rapport-building and indicates interest, while in others (e.g., English) it is given cautiously paying attention to face concerns (Locher, 2013). Since advice giving requires asymmetry in relation to authority and expertise, the agony aunt presents an identity to the public. The focus of this study is Turkish agony aunt and the construction of her identity to the problem seekers and to Turkish public.

When it comes to identity, there are two routes: the essentialist view that takes identity as a stable and unchangeable concept (Hall, 1992) and the post-modern social constructionalist view that takes identity as a constructed phenomena 'always in progress' at different times and at different discursive situations (Hall, 2000). While the former sees identity as belonging to a common origin or having the same ideals, the latter perceives identity as a concept that can be 'won', 'sustained' 'abandoned or even 'lost'. Despite being a paradoxical concept, identity has found its place within discursive practices. Since the aim of this paper is to evaluate an individual identity which is belonging to the advicer persona in advice letters, Simon's (2004, p.45) self-aspect model of identity will be taken as a framework for the study. Simon's integrative approach to identity takes identity at micro and macro level. In the former level, the individual person is meant while in the latter the person is taken as belonging to a social group. According to this framework, the individual can focus on one aspect of identity and reflect that identity in interaction in terms of features. Some of these features include personality traits, physical features, social roles, group memberships and ideologies (Simon, 2004). Baker (2009) mentions that there are related links between language, culture, nations and identities which exactly means that the language that people use reflect their culture and identity.

There are many studies that focus on the construction of identity in the production of discourse (e.g. Graham, 2007; Holmes, 2005; Locher & Hoffmann, 2006; McCabe, 2004; Patrona, 2005). The scholars that both focussed on the construction of identity through systemic functional grammar are McCabe (2004) and Patrona (2005). McCabe (2004) studied the chapters of history textbooks which were written for high school or tertiary institutes. According to the results of the study, authors create an authoritative writer by using declarative mood, a combination of modal adjuncts, metaphoric modality, and finite moderator. Patrona(2005) studied modality gathered from television turns of 540 expert turns. He found that the expert voice was indicated by the use of high and low modality.

Locher and Hoffmann's (2006) study expert online advice to indicate the importance of an expert identity with the aim of examining how an advice-giver identity is created by the advicer team since the advice giver is not a real person but a fictional character created by a team working behind and planning to give advice. They studied seven recurring discursive moves to find out the construction of expertise identity of the agony aunt.

Advice and Advicer identity

Locher (2006) studied American advice column extensively from many perspectives such as discourse, identity and politeness. Morrow (2012) also dealt with advice giving in Japanese online advice column. In Turkish context Bayraktaroğlu (2001) studied face to face interaction via conversational analysis and as a result of the study she found that Turkish advice-giving is sensitive to relations and may change according to whether the

relations between adviser and advisee are intimate or not. What she means is that when the adviser and advisee had intimate relations between each other, advice was expected and it was a way to build rapport inside friendships. As far as the researcher is aware in Turkish context not much studies have been carried out in advice in relation to the identity of the advicer.

The thematic content of advice letters can be demonstrated by the following table:

TOPIC CATEGORIES	Number
RELATIONS (RELATION WITH THE ONLY CHILD OF THE FAMILY), BILATERAL RELATIONS, EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIR, AGE DIFFERENCES IN RELATIONS, INTERNET RELATIONS, JEALOUSY, RELATION WITH A MARRIED MAN, REDRESSING THE RELATION	19
MARRIAGE (DECEPTION), MARRIAGE PROBLEMS, KINSHIP MARRIAGE, MONEY PROBLEMS IN MARRIAGE	12
VIOLENCE	2
LOSING WEIGHT, PHYSICAL PROBLEM(NOSE), BIRTH CONTROL PILL , ANXIETY	4
ANIMALS	1
SEX , NOT BEING ABLE TO HAVE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP	2
ADOLESCENCE	1
MOTHER IN LAW	2
PROBLEMS (FAMILY), (PERSONAL), (MOTHER-DAUGHTER)	5

According to the table, when the content of the advice letters is considered most frequent topic is on relations with 19 occurrences and marriage theme with 12 occurrences follow. This means that the relations of problem-seekers and their marriages were of vital importance to them. The second less frequent theme is personal and family problems with 5 occurrence and the other less frequent theme is health theme with 4 occurrence. The third less frequent category is sex (2), mother in law theme (2), animals (1) and adolescence (1) themes. It can be observed from the table that the advice letters cover a range of topics.

2.Methodology

2.1. Data

The data of the study is gathered from online newspaper's site (www.hurriyet.com). In order to describe the identity of the Turkish agony aunt 50 response letters written by

the agony aunt were taken for analysis from the year 2020. Turkish advice history can be seen as composed of two periods. The first period is the period starting from 1971 to the death of the agony aunt Güzin Sayar. The second period starts in 2007 when the first agony aunt died and her daughter took her mission of giving advice. Different from American advice column Turkish advice column does not have a fictitious character but a real persona is giving advice. The column covers a wide variety of topics from health, love, relationships, marriages to animal rights. This study aims at describing the advisor identity of the Turkish agony aunt ‘Güzin abla’ with the aim of understanding how Turkish adviser presents herself to the problem-seekers.

Data Analysis

The data is analyzed in several stages. First, Locher’s (2006) identity framework which included 6 parameters is taken as a basis for the study. The 6 parameters of the study are as the following:

1. Adviser’s name, self-reference and address terms
2. Adviser presents herself as a competent and knowledgeable source of accurate information. (manifests itself through discursive moves)
3. Adviser makes readers think and gives options when she presents her advice.(manifests itself through discursive moves)
4. Adviser has an opinion (positive and negative evaluation) (manifests itself through relational moves relational)
5. Adviser shows awareness of difficult situations (Empathy)(manifests itself through relational moves)
6. Adviser has a sense of humor (manifests itself through relational moves)

Second stage of the study attempts to analyze discursive moves in advice letters in order to evaluate parameters 2 and 3 listed on the top. The third stage of study analyzes relational moves found in advice letters of the agony aunt in order to evaluate parameters number 5 and number 6 listed on top.

Therefore, it is essential to mention about discursive moves and relational parameters in advice letters which is shown as below:

The following discursive moves were utilized in the agony aunt’s advice letters: (Locher, 2006, p.62)

Advice: There are three syntactic types of advice:

-Declarative

-Interrogatives which are either inviting an action or inviting introspection

-Imperatives which are either inviting an action or inviting introspection

List When there is more than one piece of advice with the same syntactic form (e.g. advice=decl. list)

Assesment This move is about the evaluation of the problem-seeker’s situation

Disclaimer A type of assesment in which the agony aunt mentions that the information given is not complete or cannot match expectations due to the limitations of the column

Explanation An explanation of a move just made when an item is explained further (‘assesment’, ‘advice’, ‘farewell’, ‘general information’ ‘metacomment’ ‘open category’, ‘own experience’, ‘referral’)

Farewell Closing with a farewell or goodbye

General Information General Information given on a topic. However, when information about the personal problem of the advice-seeker is given it should be labelled as 'assessment'.

Metacomment Text-structuring comments such as 'as to your second question'.

Open Category A category for moves that do not fit in any category

Own Experience The agony aunt tells a personal narrative related to her life

Referral A special kind of advice in which it directs the advice-seeker to professional, personal help and many other details such as phone numbers, addresses, books.

The following relational parameters were assessed in advice letters of the agony aunt :

Bonding Strategy: This strategy establishes a connection with the advice seeker or readership.

Empathizing Strategy: This strategy is about awareness or understanding of advice seeker's emotional situation. By the employment of this strategy, Lucy shows awareness of difficult situations.

Praising Strategy: This strategy highlights something positive about an addressee (complimenting).

Boosting Strategy: This strategy makes an emphasis on a certain aspect of advice. The construction 'It is essential...' is an example of this strategy.

Criticizing Strategy: This strategy is about criticism of the questioner's attitudes and actions.

Hedging Strategy: Mitigating a face-threatening through lexical hedges (sort of, may be, I mean, well).

Humour Strategy: This strategy aims at bonding with the questioner. Humor as a means to hedge criticism. By this strategy the agony aunt indicates that she has a sense of humor.

Combinatory Strategies: This category is formed from combinations of advice categories like criticizing-hedging, empathizing-boosting etc.

(Locher, 2006, p.118)

After identifying the discursive moves and relational strategies of the Turkish agony aunt, the numbers of the discursive moves and relational moves were assessed in number. The following tables 1 and 2 display the number of discursive and relational moves in the advice letters.

Results and Discussion

The following section of the study will uncover the identity parameters found in advice letters:

1.The Turkish agony aunt's name, self-reference and address terms

In Turkish newspaper history the agony aunt from the year 1971 started advice giving to the problem-seekers with the name 'Güzin abla' meaning 'elder sister'. After Güzin Sayar's death in 2007 her daughter took her mission of giving advice retaining the same name 'Güzin abla'. The use of a kinship term as elder sister in Turkish is common among people who do not have any blood relations with each other indicating solidarity and thereby creating someone from your family is giving advice for you and for your benefit. The name 'Güzin abla' indicates that the Turkish agony aunt does not want to show her

expertise but instead she is willing to establish solidarity with the reader as an elder sister of the family. Therefore, how she addresses the reader and how she refers to herself is of vital importance for interpreting the identity she presents.

Since the Turkish agony aunt wants to appear as an elder sister of the family, she addresses the problem-seekers usually with kinship terms as indicated through the following table:

Table 1: Address forms in agony aunt's advice letters

Address forms	Number
Sevgili kızım, canım kızım 'Dear Daughter'	38
Sevgili oğlum 'Dear Son'	4
Sevgili okurum 'Dear Reader'	4
Sevgili okurlarım 'Dear Readers'	1
Empty(no address form used)	3
Total	50

According to the table, it is observed that out of 50 response letters of the agony aunt respectively 38 letters starts with 'Dear Daughter' while 4 of the letters employed 'Dear son'. The typical advice letter starts with 'Dear Daughter' since most of the readers who are seeking advice are women. In 4 of the letters by the agony aunt she used a more neutral form 'Dear Reader' and similar to that form in 1 of them she used 'Dear Readers'. However, it was observed that only in 3 of the letters the agony aunt did not address the problem-seekers with any address forms. The agony aunt uses a kinship term for non-relatives (Bayyurt & Bayraktaroğlu, 2001) and addresses her readers as 'Dear daughter' or 'Dear son'

As an example for the use of 'Dear daughter' the following sentence can be given:

Example 1:

Sevgili kızım, bana böyle bir sorumluluk yükleyemezsin. (16 Nisan 2020)

(Dear Daughter, you can not lay such a burden on me.) (16 April 2020)

As can be observed from the example, the agony aunt communicates with the problem-seeker by calling them as 'Dear Daughter'. The employment of kinship terms for non-relatives establish close contact with her readers and she wants to appear as a mother taking care of her family.

When the problem that the problem-seeker is reporting is not a personal one but a general problem of the society, the agony does not address that person directly and she refrains from using an address form as in the following example:

In this example the agony aunt gives her opinion regarding animal rights which is the reason for not addressing the problem-seeker.

Example 2:

Türk Ceza Kanunu'nda hayvanlara karşı işlenen suçlar, "Mala zarar verme" başlığı altında yer alıyor. Yani TCK hayvanları can olarak değil, mal olarak görüyor. Hayvanlara karşı suç işleyen kişilere sadece idari para cezası verilebiliyor. (8 Ağustos 2020)

(Crimes committed against animals in the Turkish Penal Code are taken under the heading ‘Damage to Property’. In other words TCK (TPC) sees animals not as living beings but as property. Only administrative fines can be imposed on people who commit crimes against animals).(8 August 2020)

A short extract from the letter displays the lack of address form in the advice letter. This may indicate that since the agony aunt is talking generally about animal rights and stating what she thinks without referring to a specific person she does not use any address terms.

Similar to the previous example, the agony aunt wants to evaluate the situation by referring to the general situation in Turkey.

Example 3:

Bu kadar inat, bu kadar eziyet... Bu kadar inat, bu kadar eziyet... 21. yüzyılda hayret edilecek bir şey. Siz 6 yıldır berabermişsiniz. Demek ki birbirinizi gerçekten sevmişsiniz. (15 Ağustos 2020)

(This much stubbornness, this much torture....Something to be astonished in the 21st century. You have been together for six years. So you really loved each other). (15 August 2020)

In this example, the agony aunt not only criticizes the families who are against their sibling’s marriage but also she specifically criticizes the family of the problem-seeker for their refusal to her marriage. Since the advice letter is not directed specifically towards an addressee related to the topic she is discussing, she does not use an address term that refers to the problem-seeker. She is referring to everybody who is against his daughter or son’s marriage. As a result, the agony aunt calls the problem-seekers as ‘Dear Daughter’ which is an indication that she wants to appear as a mother or elder sister who is advising them.

2.Advicer presents herself as a competent and knowledgeable source of accurate information

The agony aunt attempts to create an expert voice by referring to general facts, using her world knowledge. The information about these aforementioned items are realized via general information and referral sections of the discursive moves of advice letters. Through uniting everyday situation with real world knowledge(Liu et. al., 2003, p.127), she presents herself as an agony aunt who is understanding the situation of her problem-seekers.

As mentioned previously, the Turkish agony aunt’s replies include many discursive moves as the following:

Table 2: Discursive structure of advice letters

DISCURSIVE STRUCTURE	Number	Percentage
GENERAL INFORMATION	124	15,1%
EXPLANATION OF GENERAL INFORMATION	8	0,9%
ASSESSMENT	495	60,3%
ADVICE	163	19,9%
EXPLANATION OF ADVICE	2	0,2%

METACOMMENT	2	0,2%
OWN EXPERIENCE	3	0,3%
REFERRAL	11	1,3%
EXPLANATION OF REFERRAL	2	0,2
OPEN CATEGORY	3	0,3%
TOTAL	819	100

As can be observed from the table, the agony aunt employed many discursive forms to give advice to her problem-seekers. From a total of 819 forms assesment category was the most frequently occurring one with 482 occurrences. The second frequently occurring move in advice letter was advice category with 158 occurrences. The third frequently employed category was general information category with 122 occurrences. Other categories which were not employed frequently are referral category with 9 occurrences, explanation general information with 8 occurrences, explanation of assesment with 7 occurrences and open category with 3 occurrences, respectively. While explanation of referral, own experience, metacomment and explanation of advice occurred two times in both of the categories in advice texts. Since in expert voice identity formation general information and referral categories and the explanation of these categories are important, it is necessary to give examples of them. Out of 788 discursive moves of the agony aunt 122 occurrences were from the general information category and 8 occurrences were giving explanations of general information. Another related move was the referral category which included 9 occurrences and 2 occurrences of explanation of referral move. In example 4, the agony aunt displays her knowledge about sexual matters in marriage:

Example 4:

Genç insanların, evlilikten beklentilerinin çok önemli bir bölümü cinsel uyumdur. İnsanların dünyaya geliş nedenleri olan cinsel dürtülerini tatmin yoludur. Gerçek bir sevgiyle bütünleştiğinde, cinsellik çok büyük bir mutluluktur. Şunu ayrı tutalım, yıllarca süren evliliklerde, çiftlerden birinin geçirdiği bir kaza ya da bir rahatsızlığı sonucu cinsel hayatı bitebilir. Bu durumda elbette çiftler, sevgiye dayalı bir beraberliği sürdürebilirler. (19 Şubat 2020)

(A very important part of young people's expectations from marriage is sexual harmony. It is a way of satisfying people's sexual urges which is the reason for their arrival to the world. Sexuality is a great pleasure when combined with true love. Let's keep this a part, in marriages that last for years, an accident or an illness of one of the couples may end their sexual life. In this case, of course, couples can maintain a relationship based on love.) (19 February 2020)

In the examples, the Turkish agony aunt displays her social and general knowledge concerning marriage. When required she presents her knowledge and her expertise to the readers to create an expert adviser who is able to give information to her readers by her experience in real life.

In another example, the problem-seeker comments on the violence the problem-seeker and her sister were suffering. The agony aunt directs the problem-seeker to another person and another place which can be considered as a special kind of advice on its own.

Example 5:

Sen de bakanlık ileri gelenlerinden Sinan Bey'i arayıp durumunu anlatabilirsin. Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanı Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, bu tür konularda son derece hassas davranıyor. Eminim bu yazıya da ilgi gösterecektir. Kendisinin köşemi takip ettiğini ve senin gibi zor koşullarda olan genç kadınların durumuyla yakından ilgilendiğini söyleyebilirim.(15 Mayıs 2020)

(You can also call Mr. Sinan, one of the ministry leaders, and explain your situation. The minister of family, Labor and Social Services Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk is extremely sensitive about such issues. I am sure he will be interested in this letter as well. I can say that he is following my column and is closely interested in the situation of young women who are in difficult situations like you.) (15 May 2020)

In example 5, the agony aunt wants the problem-seeker to consult the minister which represents her knowledge related to the circumstances. She has knowledge about the fact that the minister is sensitive to such violence people experience.

3.Adviser makes readers think and gives options when she presents her advice

Advice which tells 'what is best for you' in Searlean (1969,p.67) terms is usually activated by the existence of a problem (Placencia, 2012). That is, a problem-seeker asks for advice and the adviser replies to his demand in advance which indicates the dialogic side of advice. Advice as a discursive move is the core category of advice letters since the only aim of problem-seeker is to get a piece of advice which is offered specifically for himself. Many scholars mentioned about the expert side of advice-giving in their studies (Locher & Hoffman 2006; Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Silverman et. al.,1992).

Among the discursive moves advice is the category that the agony aunt directs the reader and the potential readers to think and act in some way rather than the other way. Advice by the agony aunt is realised through three syntactic types: imperative, interrogative or declarative sentences which is displayed by the following table:

Table 3: The Syntactic Forms of Advice in Turkish Advice letters

Form	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative	131	80,3%
Imperative	22	13,4%
Interrogative	10	6,1%
Total	163	100

According to the table, there are three types of advice employed by the agony aunt in the corpus. When the overall distribution of advice forms are analyzed, it can be observed that declarative forms are the most frequently employed forms in the corpus of advice letters which forms 80.3% of the data. When advice is realized in the form of declarative sentences, it appears mostly in the form of suggestion. The second frequently employed advice form in the data is imperative form which forms 13,4% of the data while interrogative forms form 6,1% of the data. It is known that imperatives are more direct than declarative and interrogative forms (Locher, 2006, p.193) and imperative forms are usually used in giving instructions (Trosborg,196,p.190). Considered from this perspective, Turkish agony aunt gives options rather than directions to the problem-seekers requesting for advice. Since she does not use imperative and interrogative forms

frequently, it can be said that she wants to appear as an adviser who is making her followers think rather than giving some directions to follow and obey.

The following example can be given from the data to give an example of declarative sentence:

Example 6:

Evet, bence ona bir şans vermelisin. (Declarative) (14 Ağustos 2020)
(Yes, I think you should give him a chance.)(14 August 2020)

In this example, the problem-seeker asks whether she should give a chance to her boy friend who was raised a bit different from her and the agony aunt gives the problem-seeker hope about his boy friend.

The example of imperative advice from the data is as the following:

Example 7:

Bu yüzden sevgili kızım, kendini bu kadar suçlama.(2 Aralık 2020)
(Do not blame yourself this much because of this my dear girl.) (2 December 2020)

An example of interrogative forms from the data is as the following:

Example 8:

Hep şans vermekten söz ediyoruz, o halde ona bu konuda bir şans vermeyi düşünemez misin? (19 Şubat 2020)

We always mention about giving a chance, then can't you consider giving him a chance in this topic? (19 February 2020)

In this sentence, the Turkish agony aunt by giving advice in the form of declaratives wants to appear to his advice-seekers as an adviser who is making people think by giving some options in the form of suggestions. The scarce use of imperative and interrogative forms gives the impression that she refrains from imposing people to behave in the way that she wants. Therefore, she can be considered as a considerate adviser who is not imposing any act on people but rather she wants them to interpret her advice.

4.Adviser has an opinion (positive and negative evaluation)

Opinion is reflected through positive and negative evaluations. The latter manifests itself via praising strategies and the former via criticizing strategies. Praise is defined as 'an act which attributes credit to another for some characteristic, attribute, skill, which is positively valued by the writer'(Hyland, 2000). Criticisms are those 'acts which show that speaker has a negative evaluation of some aspect of hearer's face'. (Brown & Levinson, 1987,p. 66).

A study was conducted by Hyland and Hyland (2001) to figure out the use of criticism and praise given to ESL students as feedback by teachers. What they found was that although praise was the frequently employed strategy in teacher feedbacks, it was used to soften criticisms and suggestions rather than appreciating the quality of the work. In addition, they found that hedging devices, question forms, and personal opinion forms were employed in order to soften criticisms and suggestions to get redressive action and create a polite perspective (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In a study carried out by Diani (2015) in Italian and english book reviews she found that english book reviews employed direct criticism than mitigated criticism, while Italian reviews attempted to avoid using criticisms and when they used criticism, they were using mitigated criticisms through hedging elements.

The studies dealing with the use praise and criticism in academic genres made use of politeness theories (Myers, 1989; Johnson, 1992; Johnson & Roen, 1992; Hyland, 2000). Myers (1989) highlighted the use of passives and pronoun use as a recurring feature of research articles. Johnson(1992) and Johnson and Roen (1992) studied student compliments in peer reviews and recognized that peer reviews were giving importance to maintaining rapport and mitigating criticism(Johnson, 1992; Johnson & Roen, 1992). Johnson and Roen (1992) observed that before criticism is offered praise act took place. They observed that in the closing sections of the reviews praise was employed to strengthen solidarity and be in good terms with the author of the paper the researcher is reviewing.

Similar to academic book reviews, advice letters contain praise and criticism acts. Adviser can present and evaluate her positive and negative opinion in relation to the problem of the problem-seeker. While the agony aunt indicates her positive opinion through praising strategy, she indicates her negative opinion through the use of criticisms.

Table 2: Relational strategies in advice letters

Speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Criticism	44	22,4 %
Hedging	38	19,3%
Boosting	35	17,8 %
Bonding	31	15,8 %
Empathy	31	15,8 %
Praise	13	6.6 %
Criticism&Bonding	1	0.5%
Hedging&Criticizing	1	0.5 %
Hedging&Empathy	1	0.5 %
Criticism&Booster&Hedging	1	0.5 %
No strategy employed	592	-
Total Strategy	196	100

Within the corpus out of 196 relational strategies the most frequently employed relational category in the corpus is criticism with 22.4% (196/44). Praise is employed with 6.6% in our corpus. Since the aim of this study is to evaluate praise and criticism use in advice letters, other relational categories will not be evaluated in a detailed manner.

In this example the agony aunt is against the opinion that women have concerning having a baby before the marriage settles. She indicates her opinion with a criticism in the following way:

Example 9:

Bana göre çok yanlış ve hiçbir zaman sonuç vermeyen bir düşünce bu. (12 Ağustos 2020)

(According to me this is an opinion that is very wrong and can never have a result.) (12 August 2020)

In this example, she indicates that she is against the opinion ‘Everything will change after the baby’ criticizing the problem-seeker which means that the agony aunt identity does not always support the problem-seekers but she is able to reflect her opinion concerning a problem.

In the example below, the agony aunt criticizes the problem-seeker who is complaining about her husband and blaming her husband for every problem that they experience as in the following way:

Example 10:

Evliliğinizde kendi hatalarını da görmeyi deneyebilirsiniz mesela... (16 Nisan 2020)

(You can try observing your own mistakes in your marriage, for example...)(16 April 2020)

In this example, similar to the previous one the agony aunt does not support the problem-seeker but she wants the problem-seeker to make introspection and to evaluate her marriage by looking at herself.

In another example, we observe the use of criticism by the following sentence:

Example 11: Sevgili kızım önce söyleyeyim, kendine haksızlık etme, Türkçen çok iyi, kendini de çok güzel ifade edebiliyorsun. (16 Temmuz 2020)

(My dear Daughter, let me tell you in advance first, don't be unfair to yourself, your Turkish is very good, you can express yourself very well.(16 July 2020)

As can be observed in these examples, the agony aunt reflected both her positive and negative attitude to the problem-seekers. By the use of criticism and praise the agony aunt establishes a balance to prolong the attention of his readers. In other words, she indicates that she is realistically and at the same time objectively evaluating problem-seekers problems and she indicates that advice is independent of her identity.

5.Adviser shows awareness of difficult situations (Empathy)

Empathy which comes from French ‘empathie’ finds its equivalent in Turkish as ‘duygudaşlık’ which means having the same emotion with other people. (www.tdk.gov.tr). Empathy emerged as a term at the beginning of the 20th century. The notion empathy centers around two aspects: first, the capacity to understand how people think and feel and second, the capacity to establish solidarity with others in a social context (Stueber, 2013).

Generally, empathy is realized in two ways: people show empathy for another's feeling or they show empathy for another's life condition (Hoffman,1987, p.52).Empathy is utilized as a supportive strategy since it forms positive rapport between people interacting with each other (Locher, 2006,p.133). This category indicates that the adviser persona can show empathy towards his problem-seekers by dealing with them individually (Locher, 2006, p.200). From the table, it can be observed that out of 196 strategies 31 empathy occurrences were found.

The following example indicates the empathizing power of Turkish agony aunt for a problem-seeker

In this example, the problem-seeker who is an 18 year old teenager sent her naked photos from internet to someone who told her that he will marry her. After getting the photo the unknown person threatened her saying that he knows what to do to her which created stress for the teenager problem-seeker thinking what the man can do to her and the agony aunt shows empathy to her by finding a situation that fits to this situation through the following example:

Example 12:

Bu tıpkı bazı yaşlı insanlara tuzak kurup birikimlerini ele geçirmeye çalışan soyguncuların yaptığına benziyor. (22 Haziran 2020)

(This is just like what the robbers do, trying to trap some old people and seize their savings. (22 June 2020)

In this example the agony aunt evaluates the marriage of a woman through the following example:

Example 13:

Hep ayrılmak istemişsin ama sanırım senin bu boşanma düşüncen, hayatına giren o genç adamdan sonra daha bir netleşmiş. Onun ilgisi, sana düşkünlüğü ve özellikle de sanırım cinsel uyum sağlayabilmeniz seni değiştirmiş. (16 Nisan 2020)

(You always wanted to leave, but I guess your idea of divorce became clear after that young man who came into your life. His interest, his fondness for you, and especially your sexual orientation I guess changed you.) (16 April 2020)

The agony aunt is responsive to the problem seeker's feelings and evaluates the cues in order to understand how the problem-seeker is feeling and why is she behaving the way she does. An agony aunt identity without empathy cannot be possible and she cannot prolong a life time advising people.

6.Adviser has a sense of humor category

Humor is known to have positive effects like improving health, contributing to psychological health, coping with stress and people who carry a sense of humor are known to have better relations in coping with others (Martin, 2019). However, since Aristotle and Plato's times and also in present times, humor is perceived as an indication of aggression and a manifestation of showing superiority to others (Billig, 2005). Humor has positive and negative effects (Ruch&Heintz, 2016). Thus, to use humor inside an identity or not seems to be a dilemma depending on many factors which are not easily visible.

According to Locher(2006,p.201), humor contributes to the tone of the advice letter stylistically. What she means is that humor has the effect of building a bond with the reader. It can function to hedge a piece of advice or it can sometimes hedge a criticism. In other cases, Locher (2006,p.201) indicates that it arouses interest to boost the interest of the problem-seekers. Despite the pragmatic uses of humor in American advice column, this category was not employed in Turkish data at all. Out of 217 politeness strategies such as bonding, praising, criticizing, humor was the only category that was not used by Turkish agony aunt. This finding is consistent with Morrow's (2012,p.274) study who found that humor was not observed in Japanese advice columns. An explanation for this could be the fact that advice is taken so seriously in Turkish context that the agony aunt refrains from using humor to her problem-seekers. Therefore, she demonstrates that she is dealing with their problems in a serious manner.

Conclusion

The present study had attempted to demonstrate the identity displayed by the Turkish agony aunt. She presents herself as an elder sister or mother who is helping the problem-seekers. From time to time the agony aunt uses her world knowledge to show her expertise to the problem-seekers. In our corpus, the agony aunt preferred to use declarative sentences while giving advice. She was also able to praise and criticism to indicate her positive and negative attitude. Contrary to the American adviser who presents herself as humorous, the Turkish agony aunt similar to Japanese agony aunt does not use humor in presenting her identity to Turkish readers which can define the borders of advice in Turkish context without humor.

The study may have some implications for the teaching of Turkish as a second language to nonnative speakers such that Turkish language teachers can teach non native speakers not to use jokes when someone asks them advice. This study explored how Turkish agony aunt presents herself to the problem seekers but other studies from politeness perspective, metadiscursive aspects need to be considered for future research to uncover Turkish advice.

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