



A COMPARATIVE READING OF *CAT IN THE RAIN* AND *HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS* IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

YAĞMURDAKİ KEDİ VE TEPELER BEYAZ FİLLER GİBİ ADLI ÖYKÜLERİN YABANCI DİL SINIFLARINDA KARŞILAŞTIRILMALI OKUNMASI

Necat KUMRAL 

Assistant Professor, Tokat Gazi
Osmanpaşa University, Faculty of
Education, ELT Department, Tokat,
Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0002-2857-8424

Sorumlu yazar/ Corresponding author:

Necat KUMRAL,
Assistant Professor, Tokat Gazi
Osmanpaşa University, Faculty of
Education, ELT Department, Tokat,
Turkey
Email: necat.kumral@gop.edu.tr

Geliş Tarihi/Submitted:
07.09.2022

Kabul Tarihi/ Accepted:
16.12.2022

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Hemingway, Kedi imajı, Beyaz fil,
Karşılaştırılmalı okuma

Keywords:

Hemingway, Cat image, White
elephant, Comparative reading

Kaynak gösterme/Citation:

Kumral, Necat (2022). "A
Comparative Reading Of *Cat In
The Rain* And *Hills Like White
Elephants* In Foreign Language
Classes" .*World Language Studies*
(WLS), 2 (2): 132-51

Özet

Bu makale, evli ve evli olmayan çiftlerin sürdürdükleri tipik yaşamlar vasıtasıyla Hemingway'in insan ilişkilerine bakışına derinlemesine girmek için onun iki kısa öyküsünün karşılaştırılmalı okunmasını sunmaktadır. Birinci öykü *Yağmurdaki Kedi* evli olan bir çiftin yaşam biçimini betimlerken, ikinci öykü olan *Tepeler Beyaz Filler Gibi* ise evli olmayan bir çiftin tipik yaşam biçimini ön plana alır. Yazar yaşama aynı noktadan yaklaştığından ve çiftlerin yaşam tarzlarında bir fark görmediğinden anlatıcıyla aynı bakış açısına sahiptir. Yazar, her zaman diğer kişiyi baskı altına almak için daha üst düzeyde olan pozisyonumuzu kullanmaya ve kişinin durumunu kendi lehimize her türlü çevirmeye devamlı hazır olduğumuzdan insansı zayıflıklarımıza ve kuvvetli yanlarımıza ışık tutmaktadır. İster evli ister iyi eğitilmiş olsun, ne yazık ki her iki öyküde de istismar edilmek üzere seçilenler kadınlardır. Keskin eleştirel gözle baktığında, okuyucu öykülerdeki yaşamların tipik ve basmakalıp insanlar tarafından sürdürülenler olduğu kolaylıkla anlayabilir. Öykülerde paylaşılan ortak alan öylesine resmedilir ki insanların her hangi bir toplumda aynı davranış biçimini sergiledikleri söylenebilir. Yazınsal (edebi) yapıtların (eserlerin) yabancı dil sınıflarında karşılaştırılmalı okunması, öğrencileri söz konusu dille devamlı karşı karşıya bıraktığından, onların ikinci dil/yabancı dil edinimini önemli bir dereceye kadar kolaylaştırır. Bu sürekli karşı karşıya bırakma, sözcük öğreniminin ve bellekte tutulmasının anlamlı öbekler halinde ve düzenli bir şekilde gerçekleştirilmesini de destekleyebilir.

Abstract

This article proposes a comparative reading of Hemingway's two short stories to delve deeper into his look at human relationships through typical lives that married or unmarried couple leads. While the first story *Cat in the Rain* depicts a sort of life a married couple leads, the second story *Hills like White Elephants* foregrounds a typical life of an unmarried couple. The vantage point the narrator holds is the same, as the writer approaches life from the same point of view and sees no difference between the life styles of these couples. He sheds lights on our human weaknesses and strengths because we are always ready to make use of our superior position to subjugate the other and exploit his or her status every which way. Unfortunately, in both of the stories, women are chosen to be exploited no matter whether they are married, or whether they are well-educated. With a keenly critical eye, the reader can easily understand that the lives presented through the stories are typical and led by stereotype people. The common ground shared by the stories is depicted in such a way that it can be said that people will display the same attitude in any speech community. Comparative reading of literary works in foreign classes helps ease L2 acquisition to a great extent providing constant exposure to the language concerned. This constant exposure also helps boost vocabulary learning and retention in meaningful chunks in a regular fashion.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study has been conducted with the focus on the assumption that constant exposure to authentic language provided through literary works can help promote language acquisition in a regular fashion. Using short stories in EFL classes can meet the need if learners are expected to develop their linguistic and communicative competence through professional guidance to the world of numerous writers. Reading literary works can definitely be beneficial on their part to achieve the outcome of EFL programs as it paves the way to developing productive skills in the long run, generating more opportunity for speaking and writing classes to boot.

The stories have been selected for the sole purpose of illustrating that Hemingway depicts a sort of life through speech acts in order to hold a mirror for the reader to understand who the characters really are. The homily preached secretly bothers everyone because they realize that they might very possibly be the characters in the selected stories. Being part of the whole, every piece, any literary work, adds up to dissemination of one particular idea that human is to err and no one is exception. Communication channel given in the stories is not a two-way but rather a one-way since male characters are introduced as dominating figures. Female characters, however, simply take each chance to voice their demands or concerns the way they can. Why Hemingway treats them the way the reader realizes is not a mystery because women, according to the writer, fight a losing battle and have no power to assert their personality and express their views the way they like. They are the losing lot or the vulnerable multitude not because Hemingway depicts them the way they are, but because they lead their lives caught up in situations over which they have no control. “Their situation” says Akdoğan (2018), referring to what Marilyn French states as to why men are still central to women’s lives, “is still not good and in some parts has even worsened” (p.194). Both of the stories can also be read and criticized in the light of gender criticism because “patriarchal culture is so imbued with assumptions of male superiority” (Charters, 2007, p. 1101), “inferiority of women to men” as a result of “Victorian patriarchal assumptions” (Barın Akman, 2019, p.36), they have lower position “in that patriarchal order” (Özyön, 2020, p.119), and that “history has given grossly disproportionate attention to the interests, thoughts and actions of men” (Beatty, 1996, p.766).

The whole world is like “a universal battle ground. Each time a war breaks out. Death is always at work, by which the couple is destroyed” (Cixous, 2000, p. 265). The victory, to Cixous (2000), is a male privilege as it is seen between activity and passivity. In patriarchal western culture male writers are considered active users of their native tongue, because they are

“progenitor, procreator whose pen is an instrument of generative power [...]” (Showalter, 2000, p. 313). The same pen portrays the reader two pictures based on that sort of passivity and activity depicted between the interlocutors in each of the stories concerned. Their active or passive roles are also reflected on the language they use in their arguments in accordance with their gender roles (Üstün Kaya, 2017). The reader will be guided in a typical EFL reading class and provided with the interpretations of the stories one after the other followed by the comparison of them to complete the picture needed for a thorough understanding of the whole study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Using literary texts in EFL classes does not cover much space in the language teaching programs; therefore, exposure to authentic language is considerably limited. Comparing stories for communicative purposes in the classroom helps promote language acquisition, and learners develop both linguistic competence and performance, as they are engaged in the oral and written activities designed beforehand. Moreover, learners can also develop literary competence if they are provided with relevant and interesting short stories in a regular fashion. Stories selected for this purpose, according to Üstün Kaya (2014), are short and easy to summarize, more realistic as they mostly depict everyday life, rich in vocabulary and good examples of language use in context. Short story as a literary genre has some advantages over the other genres such as novel, drama and poetry. Speaking of these advantages, Turan and Çolak (2018) state that poetry is rich in figurative language, which poses considerable difficulty on the part of the learner when particularly s/he has no interest in poetry. They also foreground the fact that learners find no opportunity to act out what they learn in drama classes in everyday life. Novels are much longer than they can cope with in one or two class sessions, and they require more effort to analyze and discuss in a limited period of time.

Short stories, however, help develop four basic language learning skills since they give ample opportunity to the learner to practice them all in meaningful and logical contexts. As is often put, short stories can promote learning skills up to an advanced level and help develop communicative competence and performance in the process of time. Added bonus of using short stories is the opportunity to build enough vocabulary at all levels ranging from beginning to advanced. They also help foster learners’ “imaginative thinking skills” while enhancing reading skill (Abu Zahra & Farrah, 2016, p.13). Abu Zahra and Farrah (2016) also focus on the four aspects of short stories: “authenticity” as they provide authentic reading materials,

“language enhancement” since they enable learners to enhance their learning skills, “cultural enrichment” and “personal growth and reflection” (p. 13).

The very next step to consider is how to design activities in order to make them “meaning-driven, reader-centered and unintimidating” (Wing Bo Tso, 2014, p. 112), as is frequently asserted that literature classes might be dull and intimidating on the part of the learner when particularly they are teacher-centered and learners have no essential, context-related previous knowledge. When learners are given opportunity to bring their personal experience to what they are reading and discussing in the classroom environment, they can be more interested in the lesson and benefit to a great extent from all in-class activities if designed properly and accordingly. The following research questions pertain to the aspects of the L2 learning issue:

- How can short stories be compared in EFL classrooms for effective use of L2?
- To what extent can comparing stories be of help to promote L2 acquisition?
- What are the L2 learning purposes regarding the use of literature in EFL settings?

As the research proclaims that using literary works in EFL classrooms, short stories in particular, can help promote language acquisition to a certain extent, prospective readers will be guided throughout the study in order for them to follow suit the steps of comparative reading of short stories in language classes. Language learning purposes are set at the very beginning of the language teaching programs, and they are clearly defined so that their learning experience can be both incremental and rewarding in the process of time.

3. METHOD

The stories selected for the study will be analyzed consecutively in order to demonstrate how to compare them in EFL classrooms later on. The act of comparing will give learners opportunity to keep in mind the important points, which is necessary to come up with a thorough comparison of the stories. In-class activities can be designed by pairing up learners and then dividing them into groups so as to increase interaction and communication before they read the comparison of the stories and discuss important points as a whole class.

3.1 TEACHING TREATMENT FOR THE PRE-READING (PAIR WORK)

Learners are given opportunity to work in pairs in order to discuss the following questions, which will prepare them for the reading activity:

1. Whether they have read a short story before;

2. If they liked it or not. If yes, what made them like it;
3. Whether they have read a story written by Hemingway. If yes, whether they liked it or not;
4. If the story has represented events which are true to their experience;
5. If they remember the theme of the story and can talk about it;
6. If there are any symbols in the story and what they represent respectively.

3.2 TEACHING TREATMENT FOR THE READING (GROUP WORK)

Learners are asked to work in groups and read the interpretation of the story they are assigned. They keep the following questions in mind while they are reading their story. When they finish reading the interpretation of the story, they may write their answers to the questions. They are assumed to be ready for the comparison of the stories since they will have read the interpretation of the story beforehand.

1. What is the theme of the story you have read?
2. Who is the protagonist/antagonist in the story?
3. When and where did the story take place?
4. Are there any symbols used in the story? What do they represent respectively?
5. Why did Hemingway end the story the way he did?

3.3 TEACHING TREATMENT FOR THE POST-READING (WHOLE CLASS)

Learners are asked to work in groups first to compare and contrast their answers to the questions. Then, they may read the comparison of the stories in order to portray a comprehensive picture of all the core issues related to the characteristics of a modern society the stories reflect on. The following questions are critical to pose to readers, namely L2 learners, to get them involved in the post-reading activity.

1. What is the common attitude of the male characters of the stories? Is it really annoying on the women's part? Why?
2. What seems to be the real reason behind female characters' disappointment? Is it the only source of their conflict?
3. Are they both happy to be finally equal to their lovers in every respect in their social life? If not, what do you think would make them happy souls in their relationship after so many decades of social change in their modern society?

4. Do they feel fully empowered in their social roles to express their opinions and earnest demands openly?
5. What do you think the male characters should do to settle the dispute and resolve the conflict?
6. Are the female characters appearing too ambitious if they admit that they have all the rights and privileges they deserve? If not, then what is wrong with the way the male characters are treating them? Why do you think they are displaying extremely indecorous behavior combined with outright rejection of any implied suggestion when confronted with their lover's demands and adverse queries?

4. COMPARATIVE READING OF THE STORIES

4.1 CAT IN THE RAIN

This is a story of an American couple that is on holiday in Italy. Hemingway wrote the story in Rapallo, Italy where he and his wife Hadley spent some time at the Hotel Splendide in February 1923 (Griffin, 2001, p.99). A full description of the place where the hotel is situated is given. Through such a description given in detail the writer arouses interest in the reader to get involved in the whole story from the beginning to the end. Apart from a few Italian words and phrases, which add variety and authenticity to the story, the reader feels that it is easy to understand. Judging by the simplicity of the story the reader may have the notion as to what makes the story so significant to read and interpret, as it should not be that simple. Behind deceptive simplicity of the story, there is a deep layer of meaning lying in the cultural background of the work, which requires the reader to reach in order to get a full picture of what it really aims to communicate across. The whole story turns out to be "Hemingway's subtle exploration of [...] American romantic quest for identity" (Lindsay, 1997, p.15).

The story develops around a cat image in the rain. The physical world described with the cat image right in the middle is given on purpose to help the reader to understand how the woman feels in her inner world, her inner psyche. It is not solely the story of a cat crouched under a table while it is raining outside, but rather it is the story of a desperate woman married to an intellectual, rational and wise (!) man who displays so-called affection towards her while she expects more than what he says but never does. The new role of women in an equalitarian society, if not dystopian yet, developed around purely intellectual values makes them lonely in their corners, as their invaluable emotions are ignored for the sake of equality that they claim they have decisively established between man and woman. Their emotions combined with their

distinctive identities make them different, irreplaceable and beautiful. When their emotions, feelings and distinctive identities that make them different and consequently irreplaceable are ignored, there exists indifference decisively displayed towards their identity and wellbeing.

This unbearable indifference George displays throughout the story gives the reader a hint as to why she feels miserable, lonely, isolated and castaway from the center of their private life. She makes every intellectual and emotional move to attract his attention, which proves her deliberate decision to indicate that she is not an ordinary woman or an alien that he may treat as if he had no relationship with. Confined in her corner, she has the feeling that she is not a part of their mutual world as she sees no perfect harmony within the heart of their relationship so as to lead a beautiful life together. She hardly seems to be sharing anything because they have so little in common. Whatever she proposes will meet frustratingly polite refusal since he skillfully avoids considering them by just giving logical advice to confuse her mind. In such an improper relationship, he makes her feel like a tiny creature left all alone, not knowing exactly what she wants. He simply appears to be a sort of Mr. Know it all as an intellectual figure constantly reading a book with his legs on a pillow, physically motionless but mentally active with his powerful mind to win every point as if he had to. Having a creative mind without a heart inside he makes a perfect example of “a hollow posing dummy, a conventionalized figure of a sahib” (Orwell, 1993, p. 2231) rather than a loving husband ready to care and share a life of their own.

The war monument visited by the Italians is a sign of their victory symbolizing man’s invincible power over the centuries. The artists with their easels depict the moment of victory to make it immortal after so many years. The war actually never ends, as it goes on between men and women in their effort to gain superiority over the other. The battleground where she fights a losing battle is their room. She looks out while it is raining. She feels pity for the kitty when she sees it crouched under a table trying to keep dry. She says she is going to get it. He offers to bring the cat in without ever making a move. While she is about to go out to get the kitty, he says, “Don’t get wet” (Hemingway, 1987, p.129).

That was all he said to show to what extent he cares about her. As she goes down the stairs, the hotelkeeper stands up and bows to her. They have a small conversation about the bad weather. How she feels inside is given to the reader to make a comparison and contrast between the husband and the Italian hotelkeeper:

“He stood behind his desk in the far end of the dim room. The wife liked him.
She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his

dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her. She liked the way he felt about being a hotelkeeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands” (Hemingway, 1987, p. 130).

The heavy face and the big hands are not the extraordinary features a young woman would ever like. It is probably not the size or the physical appearance that makes her like him, but it is a feeling of security the face and hands give her. When she is out, an umbrella opens behind her. It is the maid sent by the padrone to take care of her. The padrone shows his respect by taking the necessary caution to help her feel important. She comes back to the room without the cat, for the kitty is gone. Frustrated she sits on the bed to talk about it. He rests his eyes from reading as if concerned with her problem:

“Did you get the cat?” he asked, putting down his book.

“It was gone.”

“Wonder where it went to,” he said, resting his eyes from reading (Hemingway, 1987, p. 130).

Her frustration grows bigger while she talks about the cat and how and where it has gone when she needs it so much. She explains why she desperately needs it:

“I wanted it so much,” she said. “I don’t know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn’t any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain” (p.130).

Apparently, she identifies herself with the kitty since she feels miserable seeing the cat in a desperate situation. In her life she feels desperate, as she is adhered to her status to play a role as an equal partner in her marriage. While she is busy looking at herself in the mirror, studying her profile first on one side and then the other, George goes on reading. Then she studies the back of her head and her neck. She is fed up with her short hair and wants to grow it so as not to look like a boy any more, though George repeats his point saying that he likes the way it is:

“I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel,” she said. “I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her.”

“Yeah?” George said from the bed (p.131).

“And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want new clothes.”

“Oh, shut up and get something to read,” George said. He was reading again.

“Anyway, I want a cat,” she said. “I want a cat. I want a cat now. If I can’t have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat” (p.131).

Being a desperate housewife is no fun at all because she is like a helpless cat in her life, a poor kitty out in the rain. She expresses how she feels inside by using the cat as a symbol to reflect her inner psyche. She seeks new horizons, new beginnings because she needs a change from the humdrum, the mundane that life imposes upon her. She feels like a real woman full of passion for a promising future to enjoy life more than ever before. She believes that she has the right to act out a role of her choice rather than the one imposed by the patriarchal modern society. With the help of the gloomy picture of the outer world, the reader is perfectly sure how and why she has developed a sense of low self-esteem and a distressing mood she is dreadfully caught up in.

Hemingway uses short but influential statements to express how she feels about the padrone of the hotel. The wife likes him for his courtesy he displays in a decisive manner, as he knows exactly how to treat women to gain their favor. His direct address to her heart and mind makes him a real man to consider as opposed to her husband who takes her existence for granted without considering her to be a woman to love and care. It is not the words that count but rather behaviors, as actions speak louder than words. Longing and loneliness frighten her more day by day, turning her into a desperate housewife struggling to create a world of happiness. She fails when her husband shouts at her to shut up while she is making a list of the things she wants to have in her life. She simply makes an effort to be a woman of her home, as she is not an alien living in the same home environment. Her heart now turns into a barren field or a wasteland, so to speak, where no love or hope can ever cherish due to the futile attempts that she makes to gain his favor. His lack of ability to understand her true emotions prepares their own destiny, for they become more estranged in their world day by day. The cat assumed to replace all her innocent demands is finally brought in:

“Excuse me,” said the maid, “the padrone asked me to bring this for the Signora” (p. 131).

Despite her deliberate actions to attract his attention, she fails since he responds with his usual indifference. Then there is this sincere deliberate action of the padrone to make her feel important and irreplaceable when she terribly needs it to regard herself as a different individual. The husband, who favors mind over heart, is pit against the padrone, who prefers heart to mind. He believes that it is man’s emotions that make him a human being rather than his intellectual faculty. Hemingway communicates this message when he deliberately expresses his thought as follows:

“Something strange but tight, [a kind of bliss mixed with gratitude] felt inside the young woman. The padrone made her feel small and at the same time important. She had a momentary feeling of supreme importance” (p.130).

A clear difference made explicit between the attitudes of the two men towards the woman indicates the source of indifference. Hemingway secretly compels the reader to stand behind either the husband or the padrone if they are ever to make a choice between them. While the padrone knows how to treat women as well as he can, George appears absolutely ignorant as to what sort of courtesy he should display in his relationship with his wife.

4.2 HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS

The first thing that catches the eye is the title because the reader is confused as to why hills are like white elephants. This analogy simply causes some confusion initially because the reader may not know what ‘white elephant’ refers to. It is in fact a rare gift which is highly valuable but impossible to keep for a long time. The reader cannot make head or tail of what he is reading until the young woman uses it for the second or even the third time in the middle of the story. “The superficially insignificant conversation takes on deeper tones,” as the reader realizes that the final remark of the woman is short but sharp, which ends the whole relationship “with various shades of meaning” (Gonzalez, 1985, p. 6). The tone of the conversation reaches a boiling point, as it turns into a quarrel, a fierce talk, causing personal destruction on both sides. The story is “after all a textual artifact, one that historically has been subjected to intensely close reading” (Link, 2004, p. 66). It begins with a detailed description of the place where they are waiting for the train from Barcelona:

“The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white. On this side there were no trees ...The girl was looking at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry” (Hemingway, 1987, p.211)

The outer world is given to reflect the inner psyche of the woman named Jig as the central character through whom the reader learns more about the American man representing the young generation with their general tendency in such a superficial relationship that they maintain to satisfy their earthly pleasures and needs. The woman has no hope to cherish in her heart no matter how hard she tries to keep the relationship as long as possible. She feels lonely and almost abandoned, for she does not have any power to exert to change things right round. The only power, she feels, is the baby that represents stability and maintains a more serious tone to their relationship:

“They look like white elephants,” she said.

“I have never seen one,” the man drank his beer.

“No, you wouldn’t have.”

“I might have,” the man said. “Just because you say I wouldn’t have doesn’t prove anything” (p.211).

Jig uses white elephant as a cultural image that turns into a symbol referring to the baby that she intends to give birth to. As a rare gift, she wants to have the baby to form a family with the consent of the man if he intends to marry. The use of this symbol bothers him to a great extent, for he rejects the idea of getting married and having a baby. He simply avoids taking this daunting responsibility since he does not feel ready to be the proud father of a baby boy or girl, as he does not know whether they are fully “equipped to act as good parents” (Gillette, 2007, p.50). His deliberate moves, while conversing logically and rationally (!), imply that he is not keen on the idea of parenthood at this point in his life. He simply pretends that he does not get the point she decisively makes when she uses ‘white elephant’ as a symbol to refer to the baby as a rare gift. She is still far away from understanding what kind of man her lover is.

They later try Anis del Toro, another drink that tastes bitter first, but then helps feel all right both physically and psychologically. They exchange their comments on how it tastes by making remarks to point out its effect on them respectively. They try to win their points by responding instantly, which sometimes makes them look funny, as there is no point in appearing superior to the other. This will never help them settle their dispute so as to reconcile at some point in their argument. Their argument reaches a serious tone signaling that they will break up at the junction of the railways where they seem to have come to the end of their relationship:

“It tastes like licorice,” the girl said and put the glass down.

“That’s the way with everything.”

“Yes,” said the girl. “Everything tastes of licorice. Especially all the things you’ve waited so long for, like absinthe” (p.212).

Using licorice, she seems to be talking about the drink that makes people feel all right, though they feel something burning in their throats when they drink it. Then she talks about absinthe, another drink with herb flavor tasting bitter. By referring to bitter drinks as signs of her grief, she truly implies that there is something that lies at the core of their argument. The whole story revolves around this implicit conflict until she realizes at some point that the sort

of relationship that she has had with him is not what she has dreamed of. She becomes more aware of the fact that he will eventually leave her if she cannot reach a final decision that can reverse the course of their relationship right round. Finally, she becomes fed up with that sort of superficial courting:

“I wanted to try this new drink. That’s all we do, isn’t it? —look at things and try new drinks.”
“I guess so” (p.212).

They talk about the new drink that they have just had. Then he comes to terms with her and starts talking about the operation for the first time, which is the core of their argument. As they talk about it, they get more tense and begin to lose their temper, which foregrounds the disparity between their views regarding whether to have the baby or not. The whole story revolves around this accidental, perhaps unwanted pregnancy:

“It is really an awfully simple operation, Jig,” the man said. “It’s not really an operation at all.” ... “I know you wouldn’t mind.” ... “They just let the air in and then it’s all perfectly natural” (p.212).

Apparently, he uses a plan-box escalation technique to persuade her, assuming that he is a better negotiator and more intelligent, for she sets a perfect example as an easy target for him to shoot at and hit whenever he feels to do so. With his unrivalled wit he thinks that he will be able to confuse her mind to make her agree on the point he makes. The girl refers to the baby as her last resort because she thinks that the baby would save the world they could have. The man thinks that she is still speaking of the world they assume that they have shared so far. The indexical sign ‘it’ causes ambiguity on their part while it becomes clear in the following lines, which does not make any change in his understanding, as he never makes any attempt to apologize for his misunderstanding. It is this irony that makes him look funny, as his misunderstanding creates ‘irony of situation’ placing him at the butt of satire. Apparently, the American intends to pursue a decadent life with no sense of responsibility.

The American and Jig speak of the same matter on separate levels, which causes communication breakdown, as they do not see eye-to-eye on the operation. It is not the operation she is afraid of, but rather the loss of baby, for she repeatedly requests assurances from the man to understand whether the abortion will eliminate the matters. While she creates an imaginary world developed around the baby to create a family of their own, he skillfully avoids her requests no matter how decidedly and earnestly she makes them to solicit his assurance:

“And we could have all this,” she said. “And we could have everything and

every day we make it more impossible.”

“We can have the world,” said the man.”

“No, we can’t,” the girl said. “It isn’t ours anymore.”

“It is ours.”

“No, it isn’t.” said the girl. “Once they take it away, you can’t get it back”
(p.213).

In a mature relationship the alternative to abortion would be to have the baby and define their relationship on new terms. The man is left at the literal level because he does not understand what she means when she actually refers to the baby by “it”.

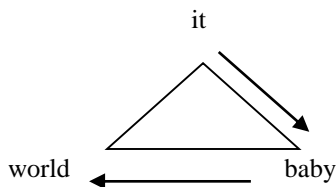


Figure 1. Jig's signification process

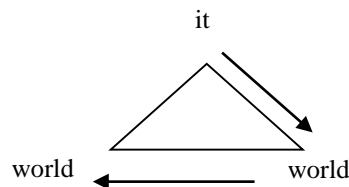


Figure 2. The man's signification process

While he appears to be a perfect negotiator, he seems to have no proper linguistic level to understand her figurative speech. She is fed up with this kind of conversation with inconclusive remarks especially when he tries to persuade her to have the operation. Despite how hard he tries to get her confused, she is still in her right mind and knows that his words are “a hollow ring”, not reasonable or logical at all, as they do not mean anything to her (Gonzalez, 1985, p. 8).

“You mustn’t feel that way,” he said.

“I don’t feel anyway,” the girl said. “I just know things” (p.214).

It is at this point that the reader realizes they have reached the turning point because she is aware of the fact that they cannot be on intimate terms any more. She simply realizes how shallow their relationship was and still is because it has never been placed on a firm ground.

“But you’ve got to realize...”

“I realize,” the girl said. “Can’t we maybe stop?” (p.214)

The man goes on talking as if trying to convince her, but she knows what sort of person he is when he says:

“...I don’t want anybody but you. I don’t want anyone else. And I know it is

perfectly simple.”

“I’ll scream,” the girl said (p.214).

That is the end of the conversation even if he does not get the point. She is perfectly sure of the fact that, “Once you know, you know, and you can never again not know” (Gonzalez, 1985, pp. 8-9). She understands that this kind of relationship will finally dissolve whether she has the operation, i.e., abortion or not. While she enjoys that kind of cohabiting, she knows that her pregnancy has changed things “irrevocably since they cannot go back to the way they were before” (Gonzalez, 1985, p. 8). While the operation sounds ‘awfully simple’ to the man, it occurs to her quite the opposite, as she might define it as ‘simply awful’. He knows that the only way to appear more mature is to keep calm and raise reasonable counter argument based on his own deliberate misperception. However, her deeper thought processes indicate quite the opposite, for she will never surrender. Instead of coming back to the table to finish his beer, after carrying the bags to the other track, he goes into the bar and drinks Anis while all the other passengers are reasonably waiting for the train just as he is. When finally at the table, feeling more content with his perfectly developed and raised counter argument, he asks if she feels better, trying to appear more reasonable. She puts it very simple retorting sharply to suggest that there is something wrong with him:

“I feel fine. There is nothing wrong with me. I feel fine” (p.214).

This simple answer tells a lot about the feeling she has at the moment because it foregrounds her understanding of what sort of person she has been with so far. Perhaps it is not the operation that bothers her a lot but rather the way he approaches the mutual problem no matter whether she would like to give birth to a baby to form a family. He simply endeavors to avoid the responsibility for having a family with the baby. This understanding makes her decide to wrap up the conversation once and for all. No one knows exactly what will happen next, but Hashmi (2003), finding the story “hauntingly enigmatic,” states that he will abandon her after the operation because she makes no bones about the ending of story, as “there is a strong support in the narrative” with references to the earlier scholarly interpretations of the story (p.72).

4.3 COMPARATIVE READING OF THE STORIES

Step by step interpretation of the stories paints the reader a comprehensive picture as to what sort of relationships they have had till the end of the stories. Sounding more reasonable

than the other in their arguments does not make one absolutely right. The women are aware of the fact that their lovers are simply hollow posing dummies like scarecrows “with no expression and nothing to express” (Frost, 1999). Both of the male characters seem to be tarred with the same brush. They display the same attitude towards their sweet hearts, as they are absolutely indifferent and uncaring. The reader becomes fed up with the shallow points they make while conversing with their women. The narrator gives the name of the male character in the first story to give the hint that George adopts an air of superiority and displays it nonchalantly. The woman feels insulted while he does not lend a sympathetic ear to what his wife talks about. What she needs is genuine affection and care she deserves. He simply talks while lying and reading to give the impression that he is not very interested in what she argues about. In the second story, however, the woman has a name while the American does not. Jig is a real entity, whereas the man is treated as if he were a nonentity, an empty shell person. She feels that she will be left all alone with her problem. She wants the baby, and she definitely believes that she can lead a life together, whereas man skillfully avoids understanding what she means when she insistently implies that she does not want to have the operation. At the end of the story, she simply knows that she cannot lead a life with him. The man’s deliberate linguistic moves make her fed up with their talk, and therefore she ends the conversation once and for all. The reader then wonders whether they could ever lead a life in perfect harmony if they were married with the baby. By comparing and analyzing the conversations given in both of the stories, the reader understands that being married or not does not make any difference if the female characters have no power to dictate whatever they are negotiating through their talk. Even to voice their earnest demands openly is still far beyond their capacity due to their limited freedom, and apparently, they are not at liberty to transgress the boundary that circumscribes their personal and social sphere.

5. CONCLUSION

Hemingway writes two different stories *Cat in the Rain* and *Hills like White Elephants* to draw one conclusion that whether married or not, men and women display the same attitude developed around learned behaviors that conform to the cultural norms and values of their pseudo modern society. Gender roles depicted in both of the stories are not different from those they were assumed to have had in the Victorian age in their clearly defined social spheres. The society in which they live shapes the attitude they display towards one another. It is the sort of upbringing that underlies their behaviors and attitudes they display when they encounter a particular problem. The reader is expected to understand what they mean by what they say, as

their actual words in their conversations may mean the opposite of what they intend to communicate across. Comparative reading of the stories in EFL classes helps the reader better appreciate the works concerned and gives him/her ample opportunity to foster ‘cross-cultural awareness’ in order to become a world citizen in this ever-changing modern global village.

REFERENCES

- Abu Zahra, N., & Farrah, M. (2016). Using short stories in the EFL classroom. *IUG Journal of Humanities Research* 24 (1), 11-24.
- Akdoğan, Ş. (2018). This novel changes lives: the women's room, consciousness raising and the confessional mode. *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 6(11), 194-204.
- Barın Akman, F. (2019). The others in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*: a postcolonial-orientalist and feminist reading. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 41, 31-48. doi: 10.21497/sefad.586536
- Beatty, J. (1996). *The Norton introduction to fiction* (6th ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Charters, A. (2007). *The story and its writer: an introduction to short fiction* (7th ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martins.
- Cixous, H. (2000). Sorties. In D. Lodge & N. Wood (Eds.), *Modern criticism and theory* (2nd ed.) (pp. 264-270). London: UK.
- Frost, R. L. (1999). Desert places. In N. Baym (Ed.), *Norton anthology of American literature* (pp.1871-1872). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Gillette, M. (2007). Making modern parents in Ernest Hemingway's "Hills like White Elephants" and Viña Delmar's Bad Girl. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 53(1), 50-69. doi:10.1353/mfs.2007.0023.
- Gonzalez, A. B. (1985). Teaching Hemingway's "Hills like White Elephants" to non-native English speakers. *English Teaching Forum*, 23(1), 6-11.
- Griffin, P. (2001). A foul mood, a dirty joke: Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain". *The Hemingway Review*, 20 (2), 99-102. doi: 10.1353/hem.2001.0007.
- Hashmi, N. (2003). "Hills like White Elephants": the jilting of Jig. *The Hemingway Review*, 23 (1), 72-83. doi:10.1353/hem.2004.0009.
- Hemingway, E. (1987). *The complete short stories of Ernest Hemingway*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Lindsay, C. (1997). Risking nothing: American romantics in "Cat in the Rain". *The Hemingway Review*, 17 (1), 15-27.
- Link, A. (2004). Staking everything on it: a stylistic analysis of linguistic patterns in "Hills like White Elephants". *The Hemingway Review*, 23 (2), 66-74.
- Orwell, G. (1993). Shooting an elephant. In M.H. Abrams (Ed.), *Norton anthology of English literature* (pp. 2228-2233). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Özyön, A. (2020) A journey of feminist rebellion through Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story The Yellow Wallpaper and her novel Herland. *International Journal of Language Academy*, 8 (5), 115-124.
- Showalter, E. (2000). Feminist criticism in the wilderness. In D. Lodge & N. Wood (Eds.), *Modern criticism and theory* (2nd ed.) (pp.308-330). London: UK.
- Tso Wing-Bo, A. (2014). Teaching short stories to students of English as a foreign language (EFL) at tertiary level. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 10 (1), 111-117.
- Turan, Y. Z., & Çolak, R. (2018). The use of short story as a teaching/learning tool: "The

Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant. *Karabük Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 8 (1), 173-189.

Üstün Kaya, S. (2014). Using short stories in ELT/EFL classes. *Başkent University Journal of Education*, 1(1), 41-47.

Üstün Kaya, S. (2017). Gender and language in short stories. *Proceedings of Eurasian conference on language & social sciences*, 202-210. Antalya: Turkey.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study was and still is based on the assumption that comparative reading of literary works, short stories in particular, in EFL classes helps ease learning the language in context if the reader understands and interprets them as properly as possible, reaching the moral behind them. Reading them from a critical perspective helps ease understanding them properly, which will both broaden their perspective to better appreciate life and foster the acquisition of the language concerned. The works selected, though not very easy to interpret, provide all the necessary details for the reader to move from the sense to the value, the theme, in other words, deeper layers of meaning existing in the cultural background of the works concerned. Literary devices provided within the stories also help the reader to acquire firmer grasps of the intricacies of the language they are learning through constant exposure to the authentic use of it in context.

In both of the selected stories, the moral preached, i.e., the central issue, is that women in their society are in an inferior position in their relationships with men. The reader gets the moral lesson and understands that to create a perfect harmony in order to have families in their society one should, or rather, must confer upon women rights and privileges they deserve. Thus, they will feel that they are private individuals in their relationships with their partners. Literary works convey this sense of responsibility to show people what they are required to do in order to better appreciate their relationship with one another. Culturally inherited learned behaviors shape stereotype men and women, yet people encounter conflict and cultural clash that need much attention so as to understand, interpret and criticize all those socially shared conventions and traditional values of a given society. In such a modern world men and women appear socially and spiritually too far apart to make beautiful music together although they are supposedly made equal every which way at last.

The stories, therefore, could be read in the light of feminist or gender criticism, which would broaden the scope and exceed the limitation of this article. While doing the research for the article, it was observed that very few articles had already been written comparing the stories concerned. Hemingway gives the reader a sympathetic perspective in order for him/her to have a look at the sort of life that the women in the stories lead. How would it be different if Jig were married to the man with whom she had spent quite a long time? Would it also be different on the part of the woman in *Cat in the Rain* if she were not married to George, her husband? These hypothetical questions might receive logical answers; however, nothing would change in their lives. It would never be that easy to change George to make him conscientious, loving husband and to have the American lend a sympathetic ear to what Jig solicits through her speech without

appearing morally degraded or denigrated. “Looking at things and trying new drinks” will never make Jig happy anymore in *Hills like White Elephants*; therefore, she repeatedly urges him to place their relationship on a firm ground of reality (Hemingway, 1987, p.212).

Both of the stories are marriage stories illustrating dissatisfaction, disaffection and the awakening of female characters suffering spiritual sadness in their futile struggles with their male partners. Jig’s dilemma is not very different from that of the woman in *Cat in the Rain* in that they both are in conflict with their indifferent partners, who appear absolutely egocentric, and adamantly selfish, taking no responsibility for creating a family atmosphere in which they could lead a womanly life style with due care and affection. Modern way of living is probably not what they dream of any longer, as they are fed up with so carefree, irresponsible life style and absolute nihilistic delusion by seeking refuge in old fashioned and perfectly ordered world. Awakening that they ultimately experience may lead to a thorough understanding of their societal position and social role that they are supposed to have admitted, adopted and developed to the extent that they should have over the past decades. In short, the stories reveal male domination over female desires in their purportedly equalitarian modern society, if not yet dystopian at all.