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THE BOOK OF FULL TEXTS

EDITOR
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lena SALEH



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11th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC STUDIES

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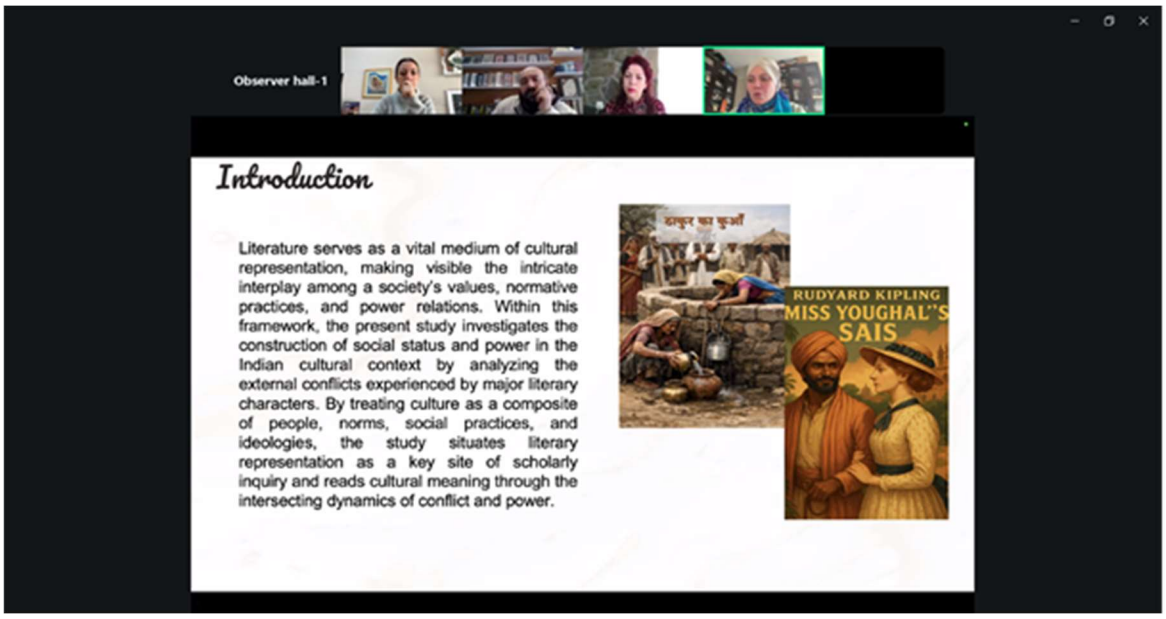
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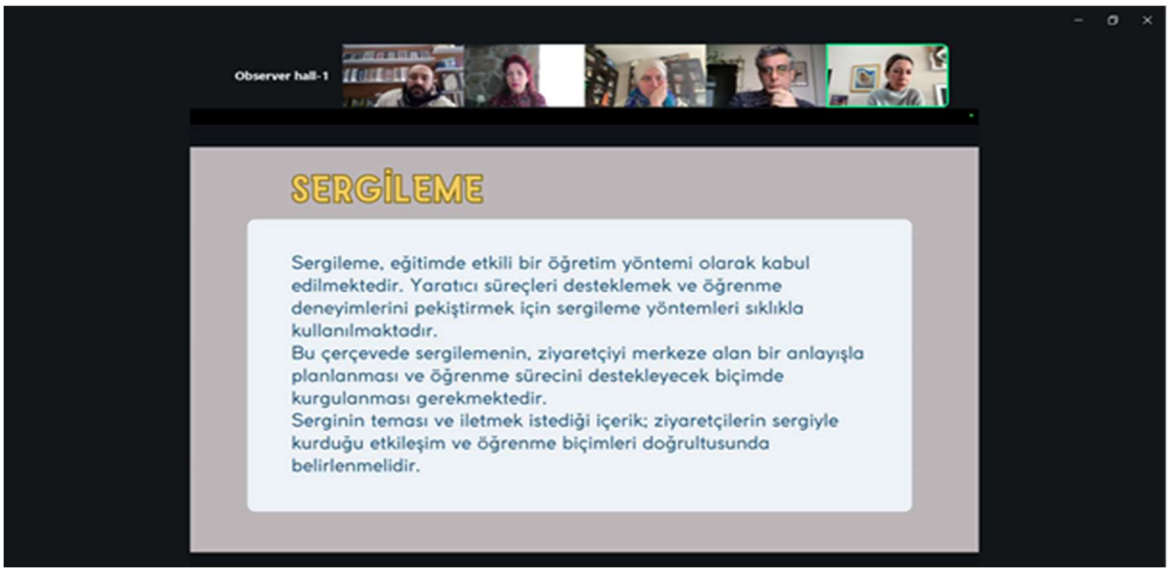
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Local Time Ankara, Türkiye: 10:00-12:00

Head of Session: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Berna Coşkun Onan		
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CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL STATUS AND POWER IN SHORT STORIES: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
Literature is considered to be one of the effective ways to represent cultural images of people, values, norms, social practices and ideologies, thus how culture is represented through literary works has been subject to many studies. Within this context, the objective of this study is to describe how Indian culture regarding social status and power relations is represented in short stories through the external conflicts the major characters experience. For this reason, two short stories were chosen: Miss Youghal's Sais by Rudyard Kipling and The Thakur's Well by Premchand. While the former story includes a British character the latter one focuses on an Indian character as their major characters. Nevertheless, the setting for both stories is India, elevating the cultural elements embodied in that geography, particularly social status differences and power distribution within the caste system. By following a qualitative research design, analysis of the characters and the external conflicts they are involved in was realized through Fairclough's three-step Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): textual, discursive and social analysis. Findings indicate that while Kipling's story reinforces the colonial power structures over Indian characters, Premchand's story foregrounds the oppression experienced by lower-status characters within the Indian caste system. By comparing colonial and indigenous perspectives, the study demonstrates how conflicts can serve as evidence of underlying social status and power relations within a culture.
Keywords: Cultural Representation, Short Story, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), External Conflict, Social Status, Power Relations, Rudyard Kipling, Premchand

KISA ÖYKÜLERDE TOPLUMSAL STATÜ VE GÜÇ İLİŞKİLERİNİN KÜLTÜREL TEMSİLİ: ELEŞTİREL SÖYLEM ANALİZİ PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BİR İNCELEME

ÖZET
Edebiyat, insanların kültürel imgelerini, değerlerini, normlarını, toplumsal pratiklerini ve ideolojilerini yansıtmanın etkili yollarından biri olarak kabul edilmektedir; bu nedenle kültürün edebî eserler aracılığıyla nasıl temsil edildiği birçok çalışmaya konu olmuştur. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın amacı, Hint kültüründe toplumsal statü ve güç ilişkilerinin kısa öykülerde başkarakterlerin yaşadığı dış çatışmalar aracılığıyla nasıl temsil edildiğini ortaya koymaktır. Bu doğrultuda şu iki kısa öykü seçilmiştir: Rudyard Kipling'in Miss Youghal's Sais adlı öyküsü ile Premçand'ın The Thakur's Well adlı öyküsü. İlk öyküde başkarakter Britanyalı bir figür iken, ikinci öykü Hintli bir karaktere odaklanmaktadır.

Bununla birlikte her iki öykünün de Hindistan'da geçmesi, özellikle kast sistemi içindeki toplumsal statü farklılıkları ve güç dağılımı açısından bu coğrafyada somutlaşan kültürel unsurların önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Nitel araştırma deseni benimsenen çalışmada, karakterler ve dâhil oldukları dış çatışmalar Fairclough'un üç aşamalı Eleştirel Söylem Analizi (ESA) çerçevesinde; metinsel, söylemsel ve toplumsal düzeylerde incelenmiştir. Bulgular, Kipling'in öyküsünün Hintli karakterler üzerindeki sömürgeci güç yapısını ön plana çıkardığını, Premçand'ın öyküsünün ise Hint kast sistemi içinde alt statüdeki bireylerin maruz kaldığı baskıyı görünür kıldığını göstermektedir. Sömürgeci ve yerli bakış açılarını karşılaştıran bu çalışma, çatışmaların bir kültürdeki temel toplumsal statü ve güç ilişkilerinin kanıtı olarak işlev görebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Temsil, Kısa Öykü, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi (ESA), Dış Çatışma, Toplumsal Statü, Güç İlişkileri, Rudyard Kipling, Premçand

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the idea of discourse is becoming more and more important in the field of social science. For some scholars, discourse analysis is understood as a narrowly focused examination of a single utterance or a limited interaction between individuals, whereas others view discourse as a comprehensive social system through which social and political realities are constituted. Fairclough (1995) describes his three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework by stating that "[e]ach discursive event has three dimensions or facets: it is a spoken or written language text, it is an instance of discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of text, and it is a piece of social practice" (p. 133). Fairclough (1995) further elaborates on CDA by defining it as a:

> *discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (pp. 132-33)*

Struggles over social status and power can be represented through conflicts in literature, and there are various studies conducted on this aspect. In Abood's (2015) study, Fairclough's CDA is employed to analyze a scene from Arthur Miller's play The Crucible, in which Tituba confesses to witchcraft when the accusers threaten her with physical violence. Tituba is a black female slave without any power, and she does not have the least chance to defend herself against accusations. The analysis presents how power is used and abused by those who wield power. Racial differences and Tituba's powerless status in the community make her the target for the disruptions. Gender, race, and class make her vulnerable to social mistreatment.

In another study, Ali and Khan (2022) highlighted certain linguistic and discursive features that concentrate on the theme of exploitation in the short story The Happy Prince written by Oscar Wilde. Through Fairclough's CDA Model, the researchers explore the characters through the lens of a real picture of the society depicted. They relate the trends of the Victorian Age in the story to today's Eastern society. They find similarities in the trends of the Victorian Age and the trends of today, present in the discourse of the so-called story. At the end of their analysis, the researchers demonstrate that some characters in the story are exploited, while a few of them are exploitative.

A study by Arslan et al. (2023) researched social power relations in a postcolonial hybrid culture in the story My Son the Fanatic, a short story by Hanif Kureishi. By using Fairclough's CDA model, researchers examined the power struggle in England particularly between an immigrant father and his son, Ali. The analysis showed the male dominance and power over women in the story.

Besides, it was demonstrated that Ali has become more powerful in the language while his father is using physical violence by hitting him. Authors concluded that power relationship is an interactive concept, and characters either share or oppose power in the story, with no character being more powerful than another.

Another example for social status and power struggles can be found in the study by Sudarna and Yulina (2021). They analyzed the short story Magic written by Katherine Anne Porter through Fairclough's CDA, particularly focusing on the social wrongs. Their analysis revealed that the oppressed character (Ninette) also needs the presence of social wrongs to support her own life. Thus, it was concluded that social wrongs are created because of the needs of the social order. Besides, they asserted that the society might intentionally create those social wrongs in the name of giving privileges to certain groups.

Negm (2015) examined the literary discourse of Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. In the play, Willy Loman is in external conflict with his boss, Howard. However, both characters are depicted to exploit the devices of power such as repetition, evaluation and verbal combats, and no one accepts being a passive recipient. Willy's refusal to surrender to his boss means that no single character monopolises power in the play. The study highlights the fact that discourse is not only a context for power to be exercised but also a context to be challenged. In another study, Abdurrahman et al. (2024) analyzed Katherine Mansfield's Bliss through CDA and described how language reflects the social inequalities between genders. They also exemplified how the feminist language of the author portrays men as the authority whereas women are seen as disadvantaged.

These studies demonstrate how CDA reveals the social status and power relations underlying literary texts. Within this frame, the current study aims to analyze how power is discursively organized and culturally legitimized through both colonial hierarchies over Indian characters and caste-based distributions of status within Indian society in two short stories employing external conflicts. Accordingly, the research question addressed in this article is:

How are Indian social status and power relations represented in Miss Youghal's Sais and The Thakur's Well through external conflicts?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design and Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis was used to explore and analyze social status differences and power relations in Indian culture as depicted through external conflicts. For the purposes of the study, Miss Youghal's Sais by Rudyard Kipling (1887) and The Thakur's Well by Premchand (written in 1932) were chosen because (a) both stories take place in India, (b) they include the social status and power relations among the characters, (c) external conflicts in both stories assist in underlining the social status and power relations, (d) outcomes of the conflicts are clearly described rather than being indeterminate, and (e) they provide a comparison of colonial and indigenous perspectives within the same setting. In this study, Premchand's story The Thakur's Well is taken from The World of Premchand, translated by D. Rubin (1969). However, the story was originally published in the journal Jagaran in August 1932 (Premchand, 1980).

Background Information for the Two Stories

Miss Youghal's Sais by Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was an English writer born in Bombay, India, whose early exposure to Indian culture and languages strongly influenced his literary work. While his childhood in India contributed to his romanticized portrayals of India, his explicit support of British imperialism has been widely criticized. A highly prolific author of novels, short stories, and poetry, Kipling received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. For more than a century before gaining independence in 1947, India was under British colonial rule.

During those years, British values dominated social life. Although Kipling's writing reflects imperialist ideology and has been widely criticized, many scholars acknowledge his respect for indigenous cultures and his detailed portrayals of Indian life (Poetry Foundation, n.d.).
Kipling's short story, Miss Youghal's Sais, is narrated by a British officer living in colonial India and centers on Strickland, a police officer who differs from other Englishmen in both his methods and his character. Strickland believes that a policeman in India must understand Indian society from a closer perspective, so he immerses himself deeply in native life and frequently visits places avoided by respectable Europeans. As a result, he is perceived as a suspicious figure and faces social disapproval within the British community. Among Indians, however, he is both feared and respected. Strickland falls in love with Miss Youghal, the daughter of a British general, and Miss Youghal reciprocates his feelings. Miss Youghal's parents, however, strongly oppose the marriage, regarding Strickland as an unsuitable and unreliable suitor. Despite this opposition, Strickland is determined to marry Miss Youghal, so he approaches Miss Youghal's family by disguising as a sais named Dulloo. By the end of the story, Strickland gains the family's approval to marry Miss Youghal and promises to abandon his strange undercover activities in order to lead a more conventional life.

The Thakur's Well (Thakur Ka Kuan in Hindi) by Premchand

Munshi Premchand (1880–1936) was born as the son of a civil-servant who belonged to the Kayastha caste, one of the lower sub-castes within the Brahmin varna, and a housewife mother in a small village called Lamhi near Varanasi (Yoğurt, 2025). Premchand is an important writer who is recognized not only in India but also worldwide, and whose works have been the subject of scholarly studies. Munshi Premchand's real name was Dhanpat Rai; however, Petievich (1999) states that Premchand's full name was Dhanpat Rai Shrivastava. Premchand initially began writing under the pseudonym Navab Rai; when his identity was exposed by the British government, he continued to publish his works under the pen name Premchand or Munshi Premchand. This name remained the one by which he was known throughout his life and after his death. His given name, Dhanpat Rāi, means "possessor of wealth," while his pen name Navāb Rāi means "of princely lineage" (Singh, 2014, pp. 372–373). Premchand's ideological positioning was first shaped by Arya Samaj's critique of Brahmanical traditionalism, its rejection of superstition, and its emphasis on social equality. By 1919, he leaned toward Bolshevik thought, and in the 1920s Gandhi's influence led him to foreground the struggle for independence and self-government as a central aim (Yogurt & Kismir, 2024). Therefore, it is also possible to see that he desired social reform in his works. While addressing various socio-political, economic, and communal problems in his works, he also depicts them.
The caste system in India consists of a rigid hierarchy in which social status is assigned at birth and tightly regulates domains such as marriage, occupation, and even the basic question of with whom one may coexist (Büyükbahçeci, 2016). In its classical formulation, the four main castes are typically listed as Brahmins (e.g. priests), Kshatriyas (e.g. warriors/rulers), Vaishyas (e.g. merchants/farmers), and Shudras (e.g. workers/service providers), while those positioned outside this order have been labeled as "untouchable" or "outcaste" groups referred to today as Dalits. This structure becomes materially legible in Premchand's story -The Thakur's Well- through the figure of Gangi: even if the story does not explicitly label her as "Dalit", the narrative logic –her exclusion from the Thakur's well, the threat of violence should she be discovered, and the restriction of contact or shared space– makes her outcaste position evident. The Thakur's Well centers on Gangi, a Dalit woman who is at the lowest social status. Her husband, Jokhu, is seriously ill and they have to drink "smelly" water. In the village there are only two wells, owned by members of the upper caste: Thakur and the shopkeeper. But people like Gangi are forbidden to drink from them; they have to fetch water from distant places.

Although she is fully aware of the consequences she may face, she becomes determined to obtain clean water for her sick husband at any cost. Despite her efforts, she fails to bring him clean drinking water. The story ends with Gangi's helplessness, underscoring the tragic reality that the social order has rendered clean drinking water inaccessible to the lower castes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the characters and the external conflicts they are involved in was realized through Fairclough's three-step Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): textual, discursive and social analysis.

Textual Analysis

During the first step of CDA, textual analysis, the linguistic elements that create the discourse were analyzed. For the purposes of the current study, major characters in each story were analyzed as to how they were described and how they were observed or perceived by the other characters whether depicted by the narrator and/or the other characters involved. Table 1 presents how Strickland and Gangi were described through lexical choices and expressions.

Table 1. Textual Analysis of Two Major Characters

Characters	Lexical choices and expressions describing the characters[1]
Strickland	*sais/groom/poor fellow/Dulloo/sais-Policeman* *He was a quiet, dark young fellow— spare, black-eyed— …* *Thus he served faithfully as Jacob served for Rachel (*metaphorical expression) *… in the whole of Upper India there is only one man who can pass for Hindu or Mahommedan, hide-dresser or priest, as he pleases.* *… he is supposed to have the gift of invisibility and executive control over many Devils.* *When a man knows who dance the Hálli-Hukk, and how, and when, and where, he knows something to be proud of. He has gone deeper than the skin …* *Strickland was not proud, though he had helped once, at Jagadhri, at the Painting of the Death Bull, which no Englishman must even look upon; had mastered the thieves'- patter of the chángars; had taken a Eusufzai horse-thief alone near Attock; and had stood under the sounding-board of a Border mosque and conducted service in the manner of a Sunni Mollah.* *His crowning achievement was spending eleven days as a faquir or priest in the gardens of Baba Atal at Amritsar, and there picking up the threads of the great Nasiban Murder Case.* **How other characters perceive him:** *… people did not understand him …* *… so they said he was a doubtful sort of man and passed by on the other side.* *He is feared and respected by the natives from the Ghor Kathri to the Jamma Musjid …* *… people said, justly enough, "Why on earth can't Strickland sit in his office and write up his diary, and recruit, and keep quiet, instead of showing up the*

[1] The lexical choices and expressions analyzed in the current study exceed those included in the table. The most representative examples are given here.

	incapacity of his seniors?" So the Nasiban Murder Case did him no good departmentally … *Natives hated Strickland; but they were afraid of him. He knew too much.* *… and she, after a while, fell in love with him because she could not understand him.* *… Mrs. Youghal said she was not going to throw her daughter into the worst paid department in the Empire, … he mistrusted Strickland's ways and works …* *Strickland and Miss Youghal were married, on the strict understanding that Strickland should drop his old ways, and stick to Departmental routine, which pays best and leads to Simla.*
Gangi	*… people like herself …* *… people like us …* *… those unlucky ones like herself …* *Why was she so low and those others so high? Because they wore a thread around their necks?* *… they bragged that they were better than people like her.* *Even the prince who set out to steal nectar from the gods …* (metaphorical expression) *Like some soldier stealing into the enemy's fortress at night she peered cautiously on every side …* (metaphorical expression) *No strong-armed athlete could have dragged it up more swiftly …* (metaphorical expression) *No one would let her walk up to the Thakur's well …* *… people would start yelling at her …* *… they wouldn't let her draw any water …* *You'll come back with your arms and legs broken …* *You'd better just sit down and keep quite …* *Gangi sat hidden behind the wall and began to wait for the right moment…* *… only those unlucky ones like herself could not fill their buckets here …* *… Gangi's resentful heart …* *If you're not a slave, what are you …* *… with a prayer to the gods, she mustered her courage …* *… ran away as fast as she could.*

As it is clear from Table 1, Strickland is portrayed as a British policeman in India, and this policeman has quite strange ways and techniques to solve the cases. Particularly with his expertise in disguise, he can go into various different groups and communities, which makes him a "respected" and also "feared" character. From the lexical choices, it can be said Strickland faces problems with his colleagues and Miss Youghal's parents.

Gangi is an Indian female character depicted as the one who is in need of clean water, specifically for her husband who is sick at home. Repetition of words "like us", "people like them", and "unlucky ones" highlight the strict boundary between the people in the story, particularly between Gangi, a Dalit woman who belongs to a community historically excluded from the caste hierarchy and Thakur who belongs to Kshatriya caste. Thakur is a title used by Rajputs, who are considered members of the second-highest caste and thus 'twice-born,' entitling them to wear the sacred thread to which Gangi refers contemptuously (Premchand, 1969) (e.g. "they wore a thread around their necks").

The metaphorical expressions used in the story refer to the actions she does in order to reach clean water, yet all her efforts end in failure (e.g. “Like some soldier stealing into the enemy's fortress at night she peered cautiously on every side”).

Discursive Analysis

As a result of those lexical choices and evaluative terms used in Miss Youghal's Sais, external conflicts of Strickland can be summarized in Figure 1. His major conflict is against Miss Youghal's parents as they do not approve of the relationship and marriage. While Miss Youghal's mother is against the relationship because she thinks that Strickland is working in the worst-paid department in the Empire, her father distrusts Strickland's ways and works. However, he solves this problem by disguising as a sais for Youghals and gaining their trust. Another conflict takes place between Strickland and natives (Indian people) caused by his skills in disguise and his eccentric style of mingling with various cultural and religious groups rather easily and quite successfully. This situation puts him in a conflict also with the other policemen in the department; they complain about being categorized as unsuccessful because of the achievements of Strickland. As the outcome of these conflicts, it can be said that Strickland achieves what he wants to: he continues to solve the cases through his own peculiar ways, and he gets married to Miss Youghal. Despite his promise to the parents in leaving those eccentric and cross-dressing habits behind and adapting himself to the routine in the Department, the narrator -at the end of the story- hints that Strickland will not be able to keep that promise so long.

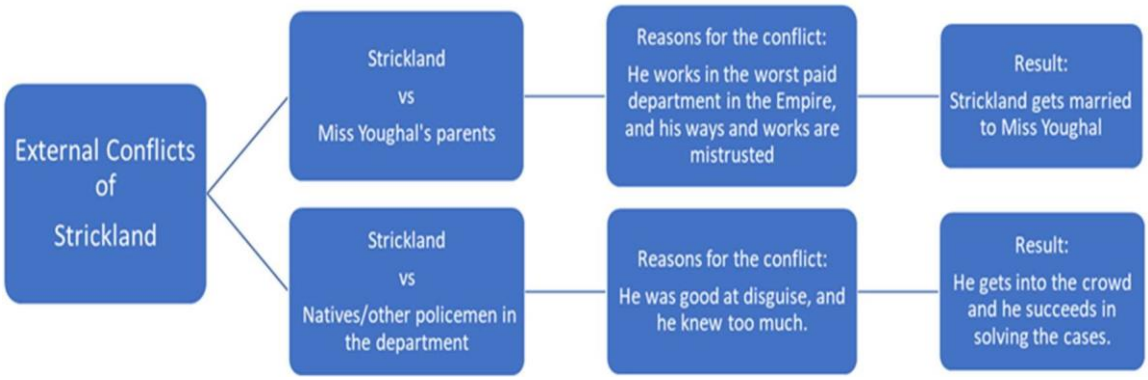


Figure 1. External Conflicts of Strickland

External conflicts of Gangi in The Thakur's Well can be seen in Figure 2. Those two conflicts in the figure were initiated by one objective of Gangi: to bring clean water to her home. The story portrays the scarcity of water and wells and who owns those wells. When Gangi sets out to fetch water from Thakur's well, she not only puts Thakur against herself but also the people like Thakur and the social class strata. This situation puts her in a conflict with Thakur, who has a higher status in the caste system and who owns a well. From the textual analysis phase, it is apparent that the boundaries between Gangi and Thakur are clear and known by the other people in the society, establishing the division between different caste members. Despite this harsh conflict, Gangi tries to get some water from Thakur's well. Although her actions are compared to brave and heroic deeds metaphorically, she fails her mission. At the end of this dangerous venture, she is seen as running for her life with fear and no water.

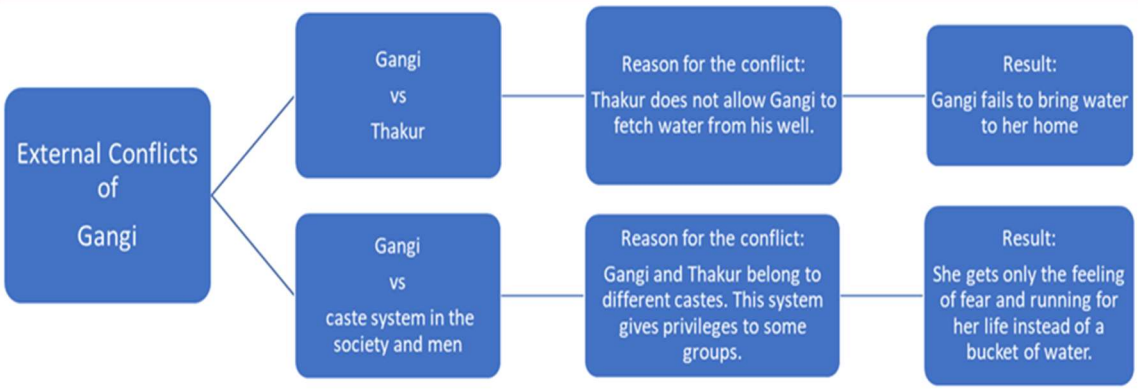


Figure 2. External Conflicts of Gangi

Social Analysis

For the social analysis step, the relationship between the discourse and the society can be examined as depicted in Figure 3. Both stories take place against a backdrop of Indian society. Nevertheless, Strickland is a British policeman while Gangi is a Dalit woman who is left outside of the caste system. The social analysis of two stories underlines that British colonialism operates at a level above India's caste system. Accordingly, Strickland is depicted struggling for his love whereas Gangi fights for clean water. The needs of these two characters can be analyzed via Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs which consists of five levels: physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization. Strickland, having satisfied the first two needs, is seen as pursuing his love while Gangi is trying to fulfill the most basic survival needs at the lowest level (physiological needs). The difference in these needs affect the mood of the stories; luck and humor are on the stage for Strickland as he "enjoys a freedom of identity remarkable in a land of hierarchy" (McBratney, 1996, p. 37) especially while he is disguised as a sais, but pain and sorrow follow Gangi (e.g. "those unlucky ones like herself").



Figure 3. Social Analysis of Two Stories

Social status and power are crucial aspects to analyze for social analysis. From this stance, Strickland has the power to go in and out of many various ethnic and religious communities in India (e.g. "only one man who can pass for Hindu or Mahommedan, hide-dresser or priest, as he pleases"). Because of his disguise skills and also the dominance of the British over the natives provide power to Strickland in reaching his goals. Nevertheless, Gangi belongs to Dalit community, which is the lowest stratum in Indian society. As stated by Navaria (2015, p. 173) "dalit' in Sanskrit means 'broken' or 'scattered'. In Hindi dictionaries, the word 'dalit' means crushed, exploited, tortured and broken". Those people are also called 'untouchables' who "live a life full of poverty, starvation, ignorance, insults, injustice and atrocious practices in humans"

(Prasad, 2023, p. 2). Furthermore, Dalits are viewed as impure (Goghari & Kusi, 2023), and they are not given the right to touch idols of gods and goddesses, to enter temples and to drink water from wells used by the upper class (Sarkar, 2022). The concept attached to these people completely contradicts the idea of purity which is mostly associated with 'water'. It is observed in the story that Gangi is set apart from clean water, which suggests that she has to maintain her so-called impurity. The story shows that even water is controlled by caste power, and that caste is sustained in daily life. In this sense, Gangi does not possess the power to cross out the boundaries of the caste system as she wishes. In sum, Strickland can move forward on the ladders of both Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Indian society, whereas Gangi is restrained on the first rung of both.

Fear is another fundamental element in demonstrating power. The answers to the questions 'Who is feared?' and 'Who fears?' clearly position Strickland and Gangi at the opposite ends of the spectrum, respectively. Strickland -as the representative of British power- is the one whom the others feared and also respected. In addition to his British identity, the fact that he is a policeman who is good at disguise means he 'knows a lot' about the natives. These two characteristics make him the one to be feared in the story. However, in The Thakur's Well, the constant fear of Gangi throughout the story is apparent (see also Hooda, 2020; Upadhyay, 2002). This fear she feels is mostly connected to physical violence she might get from the others if she gets caught (e.g. "You'll come back with your arms and legs broken").

At the end of the social analysis, it was concluded that each story mirrors Indian society and culture yet through different perspectives. While Kipling concentrates on the British colonialism era and how that power is exerted on the natives of Indian society, Premchand portrays the oppression of the lower-status people in the Indian caste system.

CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to demonstrate how external conflicts function as culturally-stimulated discursive spaces where social status and power are constructed, as illustrated by two short stories set in India – one from a colonial perspective (Kipling) and the other from an indigenous perspective (Premchand). CDA findings showed that while external conflicts of Strickland reinforce colonial power in Kipling's story, Premchand's story exposes the inherent injustice stemming from the caste system in Indian society through Gangi's continuous struggle with others who possess a higher social status. Outcome of those external conflicts also emphasize the owner of the power; Strickland achieves victory in his endeavors thus crossing the lines in colonial hierarchies while Gangi is kept behind already-determined borders of the caste system. This comparison reveals that literary discourse cannot be purely neutral but can serve for particular purposes. Kipling's story can be understood as one that legitimizes the colonial status in India whereas Premchand's story can function as a social protest to Indian social strata. This study is thought to contribute to the related literature not only in showing how CDA works in literary narratives but also in demonstrating how external conflicts can be accepted as narrative devices indicative of social status and power relations in a specific culture. From a pedagogical perspective, the current study implies that language education contexts, specifically EFL education, can benefit from incorporating these kinds of critical literacy practices that encourage learners to concentrate on how language and narrative structure co-construct ideology and power in various cultural contexts. By engaging with the steps of CDA, educators can create opportunities to raise awareness of multiple perspectives while improving learners' interpretive and analytical skills, thereby preparing them to become critical readers and thinkers.

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