


IMPROVING SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE (SC) THROUGH FEMINIST STYLISTICS (FS)

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Abstract

Feminist stylistics (FS), like any other stylistics practice, draws basic assumptions from linguistics. Yet unlike other traditional stylistics practices, FS opens its doors to ideology and extra-textual factors in the analysis of a text. Unlike the formalist stylistics, for example, it renders less importance to linguistic form and linguistic elegance. Drawing relevant linguistic tools like passivisation, transitivity, agency and fragmentation from functional stylistics, FS can be applied to analyse power structures. In line with these assumptions, the ultimate aim of this research was to study the significance of FS in enhancing the sociolinguistic competence (SC) of students through teaching local poetry in English in the Ethiopian higher education context. A feminist stylistics model of teaching poetry was integrated with communicative language teaching (CLT) tasks so that an intriguing environment was recreated in the classroom for the students to develop their sociolinguistic competence. This project was an integral part of five other stylistics research projects. It was carried out on the basis of an experimental research design following a mixed method research. A total of 190 students (63.3%) were selected from the population of 300 students in various programmes of the Department of English and Other Languages at Adama University, Ethiopia, through a systematic sampling procedure. These students were again classified into experimental groups (95) and

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control groups (95) following a systematic sampling method. The students in the experimental group took FS module through the stylistics course which included FS and other modules in stylistics. A summary of the total mean gain score out of 20 showed an interesting result. Both the control and experimental groups performed almost similarly in their feminist stylistics pre-test which was calculated out of 20%. The experimental mean score was 9.8842 and a little bigger than the control mean score of 7.2316. Consequently, the t-test result showed that the existence of a mean difference of 1.33684 was not statistically significant. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean test scores of the two groups. On the other hand, the t-test results for both pre and post tests for the feminist stylistics module were also observed. The t-value of the feminist stylistics post-test was 8.651. And, the table value of t-critical was 1.96 with 188 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the t-value of 8.651 exceeded the t-critical value of 1.96 for a two tailed test at 0.05 level of significance for 188 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the feminist stylistic method of teaching indigenous poetry does contribute to the improvement of the sociolinguistic competence of students in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context.

Key words: feminist stylistics (FS), sociolinguistic competence (SC), indigenous poetry, EFL, communicative language teaching (CLT) and gender free language

1. Introduction

1.1. Preamble

This paper deals with some core concepts in feminist stylistics (FS), which are relevant for understanding and interpreting a literary text. FS, like any other stylistics practice, draws basic assumptions from linguistics. However, unlike the other traditional stylistics practices, it opens its doors to ideology and extra-textual factors in the analysis of a text. Unlike the formalist stylistics, for example, it renders less importance to linguistic form and linguistic elegance. Drawing relevant linguistic tools like passivisation,

transitivity, agency and fragmentation from functional stylistics, FS can be applied to analyse power structures coherently. Since the roles of shared knowledge, reader-response and context are relevant, the link between feminist stylistics and pragmatic stylistics is conspicuous. Most Significant of all, as far as a methodological framework is concerned, feminist stylistics is informed by systemic-functional linguistics (SFL), critical linguistics (CL) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). My argument in this research is not reductionist because I assume that feminist stylistics owns a distinct subject matter, basic assumptions and modes of analysis.

1.2. Problem statement

Sexism is not only reflected in political power and economic structures, but also in language structures. Each text can carry an ideological message as Mills puts it: “Texts are invaded by socio-cultural norms, by ideologies, by history, by economic forces, by fashions, by gender and racial stereotyping and so on” (1995, p. 198). Language reflects general practices about gender differences, values and systems which can unconstructively influence the self-representation of women. Language is not gender free. Sexist language is pervasive in various cultures. “...sexist language is that language-use, conscious or unconscious on the part of the speaker, which may alienate females (and males), and which may lead to establishment of an environment which is not conducive to communication and effective social interaction” (p. 86). However, in the Ethiopian poetic culture, it goes unnoticed and continues to surface as a strong part of the natural system. To understand and interpret the systematic working of language, methods are lacking and discrimination through language continues to function in the system. In line with this argument, in higher education contexts of Ethiopia, home-grown poetry is not taught as an authentic subject with the

objective of developing the sociolinguistic competence, personal involvement, linguistic competence and cultural development of students.

1.3. Objectives

Specifically, this research was conducted to:

- analyse how Ethiopian poets use language to subjugate women in literary texts,
- describe how the writers use language to present the cultural and gender roles of women in poetic texts,
- assist students in an EFL context to enhance their sociolinguistic competence using indigenous poetry.

1.4. Hypothesis

A feminist stylistics method of teaching indigenous poetry does not contribute to the improvement of the sociolinguistic competence of students in an EFL context.

2. Literature review

2.1. Basic assumptions

Central to the feminist theoretical framework are the roles of language, ideology and context. Like critical linguists, feminist stylisticians assume that “language is not a transparent carrier of meanings but a medium which imposes its own constraints on the meaning which is constructed” (Mills, 1995, p. 11). Language is seen as a social behaviour and a form of social control. Mills (1995) goes on to state that society is, therefore, patriarchal.

“Most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminists also believe that society is organised in such a way that it works, in general, to the benefit of men rather than women, that is, that it is patriarchal” (p. 3). Language plays a dominant role in reflecting this patriarchal nature of the society.

For critical linguists like Fowler, language “serves to confirm and consolidate the organisations which shape it, being used to manipulate people, to establish and maintain them in economically convenient roles and statuses, to maintain the power of state agencies, corporations and other institutions (Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew, 1979, p. 190). The societal interrelation and social behaviour critically influence the stylistic choices of writers and speakers of the language. “Syntax can code a world-view without any conscious choice on the part of the speaker” (p.185). The writer uses the language which is already there in the society. The writer does not create the language of the society, but he/she creatively uses it. Core to feminist stylistics is ideology. Burton (1996) argues that:

... It is clear that we live in a classist, racist and sexist society... of these three major and massive injustices, sexism is the most deep-rooted (psychologically), the most pervasive, the most difficult to perceive, the most resistant to change-yet available as a locus for important and essential radical impetus to the organization of all unequal and oppressive power structures in our society (p. 226).

With this basic assumption, feminist stylistics works towards the following research questions:

- A. Why have authors chosen certain ways to express themselves rather than others?
- B. How are certain effects achieved through language? (Mills, 1995, p. 5)

These questions are not specifically designed for feminist stylistics. They are recurrent questions particularly in contextualist stylistic interpretations. In this feminist model, however, the questions can provide stylisticians with skills to fundamentally question those traditionally received wisdoms about gender and analyse the roles of language in texts of various kinds.

2.2. Sociolinguistic competence (SC)

Students in EFL contexts in many cases are not exposed to exercises and practices to enhance their own sociolinguistic competence. In many cases, lessons focus on grammar exercises. The question here is what is sociolinguistic competence? How can we enhance sociolinguistic competence? Is it possible to transfer SC from the mother tongue context to a foreign language context where language inputs are negligible? Is there any research which evaluated the development of SC in an EFL context? Canale and Swain (1980) define SC as “knowing and understanding how to speak given the circumstances you are in” (p. 1). Similarly, Freeman and Freeman (2004) argue that second language learners must learn how to produce and understand language in different sociolinguistic contexts, taking into consideration such factors as the status of participants, the purposes of interactions, and the norms or conventions of interactions. This is something that language learners must be taught and given opportunities to practise. This includes, but is not limited to: expressing attitude or emotion, understanding formal and informal expressions, and knowing/recognising common slang or idiomatic expressions.

In a similar study in an EFL context, Mede and Dikilitas (2015) argue that in order to enhance the learners' knowledge of SC, language teachers should expose learners to authentic use of language and conversations through social media, songs, literature and so on as well as design classroom practices engaging students to use the language in real-life contexts. Besides, students should be encouraged to interact with native speakers by joining the student exchange programmes or the social network where they can make friends from different parts of the world. Sociolinguistic norms of language use should be integrated in the existing curricula as well as in the assessment which will aid the development of this particular strategy both in teachers and learners.

In a research, Kora (2016, p. 21) found out that the instruction of SC and pragmatic competence results in the increased level of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence and overall oral proficiency in the target language among L2 learners. In this experimental study, the scores of the experimental group increased from 55.88 (written pre-test) and 16.94 (oral proficiency pre-test), to 62.82 (written while-test) and 20.00 (oral proficiency while-test), and finally, to 72.59 (written post-test) and 22.47 (oral proficiency post-test). The final increase in the score yielded to 16.71 in the written tests and 5.53 in the oral proficiency tests, which is significantly more than that of the control group which is 5.21 in written tests and 2.11 in the oral proficiency assessment tests, thus confirming the hypothesis.

In the Malaysian context, Muniandy (2010) argues that it is important that the second language instructors in Malaysia be familiar with sociolinguistics. Teaching language is not just about learning the rudiments of the language, but also various cultural refinements. Students must be made aware of formal and informal language use. They should be knowledgeable as to appropriate expressions for different contexts. Students must be mindful as to when they can resort to colloquial language and when

formality is necessary. Lastly, students need to be made aware that mastering English does not mean acquiring native proficiency, but rather having universal intelligibility. As these reviews indicate, there is a strong need to incorporate exercises and drills in EFL contexts to enhance the SC of the learners.

2.3. A Review of the Basic Components of FS

A study of feminist stylistics may include a critical analysis of context, lexis, syntax and discourse.

A. Context in Feminist Stylistics

Inherently feminist stylistics is a breakaway from a text-immanent model of poetry to a context-based model. This context dependent interpretation of poetry allows the inclusion of socio-historical, cultural, ideological and economic factors. Consideration of these extra textual factors in the interpretation of meaning is assumed to create situations for the reader to interact with the text, that is, to accept or reject the message as intended by the author. Whatever the author reflects in the text is not taken as fixed and final. The reader has a role to play in making the best out of the text. The values and effects have relevance in the meaning making process. Before presenting a feminist model of context, a critical linguist's view of context is presented. This view will help understand the feminist model of context. In the analysis of context, for example, Fowler identifies four essential factors which include: 1) Context of utterance, 2) Context of culture, 3) Context of reference and 4) Implicature.

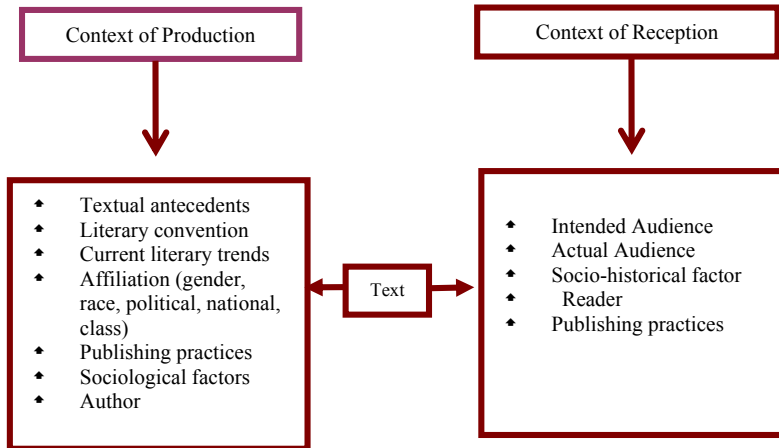
- I. Context of utterance: It is the situation in which the discourse is performed. It comprises the physical environment, the location of the participants, the channel and the time. Context of utterance can be

analysed stylistically interpreting elements such as time deixis, place deixis and person deixis.

- II. Context of culture: It is the hallmark of the network of social and economic conventions and institutions in the text. The context of culture influences the context of utterance and the formality levels in the poem.
- III. Context of reference: It is the topic or the subject of a poem (1-3 are adapted from Fowler, 1986, p. 86-87). Besides these three factors, Fowler includes “implicature” as an influencing factor.
- IV. Implicature: It is the knowledge and motive of the poet and the reader (addressor and addressee). Fowler defines “implicature” as “a proposition emerging from something that is said, but not actually stated by the words uttered, nor logically derivable from them” (Ibid, 106).

Interpretation of the context of utterance, context of culture, context of reference and implicature can help us define the meanings of context in poetry, which is an essential element in understanding the theme of the poem. Fowler also argues that implicature can be interpreted following Grice’s “Cooperative Principle”. Grice’s principle can assist the comprehension of poetic figures such as metaphor, hyperbole and litotes. Literary texts do not present natural speech situations which can be tested against these maxims. It should be, however, understood that literature is a reflection of the various contexts of society: its culture, ideology and thinking. In the following feminist stylistic model, context includes extra-textual factors (Mills, 1995, p. 241):

Figure 1: Context in the Feminist Stylistic Model Context



Moving away from the text-immanent staple of the formalist stylistic model of context, this feminist model of context considers both the context of production and reception of a text. Text is influenced both by factors of production and reception. Bidirectional influence is the influence of the text. Since the context of reception is not disregarded like in the traditionalist model of stylistics, the reader has relevant roles to play in the meaning making process. Meaning is fluid and is not fixed in the text. Bringing background experience, the reader can question, resist or reject the text. The meaning of the text varies from reader to reader because the text positions the reader in a variety of different ways. The reader can conceptualise and bring background knowledge and experiences to interact with the text. This model makes meaning processing a subjective process.

B. Lexis, Syntax and Discourse

Feminist stylistics assumes that words can present and perpetuate a particular view of women. It excavates the places where ideological knowledge informs meaning. At the various levels, effects of sexist

language can be excavated. As stated in the work of Mills (1995), feminist stylistics aims to:

- expose the workings of gender at different levels in text
- influence to shape the boundaries of discourse
- change structures and ways of thinking
- draw the relationship between lexical items and discourse
- bring about change in representational practices through critique, teaching and developing new models of writing
- track down hidden assumptions
- make strange of the ordinary
- make readers re-examine the texts in light of gender
- create a form of consciousness raising (Mills, 1995)

These objectives appear to be specific, measurable, achievable, reliable and timely (SMART) so as to reverse male-as-a norm view of discourse and sustain gender free classrooms. Great efforts, time and funding are required to achieve all the objectives. With these “SMART” objectives, analysis of a poetic text can be made at lexical, syntactic and discourse levels which are summarised in the table below (adapted from Mills, 1995, pp. 83-197):

Table – 1: Feminist stylistics levels of analysis

LEXICAL ANALYSIS	SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS	<i>DISCOURSE ANALYSIS</i>
1. <u>Generic pronoun:</u> “He” E.g. If physics teacher needs an assistant, he can contact the secretary.	1. <u>Proverbs</u> E.g. “Behind every successful man there is a woman.” 1. “The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” 2. “A woman’s place is in the home.”	1. <u>Character description</u> E.g. Description of the women in terms of their legs and other parts of the body.
2. <u>Generic pronouns</u> E.g. Mankind, manpower, man-hour, craftsman, fireman, postman, dustman, fisherman.	2. <u>Metaphor</u> E.g. 1. Sally is a block of ice. ♦ Comparing women with the moon, nature, night and heart	2. <u>Role of female characters in texts</u> ♦ “Women have relations and men have jobs.”
3. <u>Negative description of women</u> Usage of words with sexual overtones and non-prestigious connotations e.g. courtesan, mistress, hostess, governess, adventuress, lady, queen, goddess and priestess.	3. <u>Jokes and humour</u> E.g. Q: How do you get an Essex girl to laugh on Sunday? A: Tell her a joke on Friday.	3. <u>Fragmentation</u> ♦ Representation of women fragmented into anatomical elements (eye, face, breast, legs, heart...) ♦ Comparing parts of the female body with nature such as rose, sunlight, star, nightingale ♦ Women are described as passive, natural and consumable.
4. <u>Address forms</u> E.g. Lady poet, lady doctor, woman writer and lady chairperson	4. <u>Transitivity choices and passivisation</u> “Who does what to whom?” E.g. He held her tightly.	4. <u>Focalisation</u> ♦ Position relative to the story and degree of persistence. Presenting the male character as the sole source of vision, information and judgement. Male oriented process of seeing and verbalising in text.
===	==	5. <u>Schema</u> ♦ Producing different visions of male and female. Describing women as sexual objects, victims of murders, agents and being acted upon.

C. Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Feminist stylisticians analyze sexism in a literary text at the levels of lexis, syntax and discourse. These textual features are interpreted against the contexts of production and reception of the text. Interpreting a literary text under the contexts of production and reception provides the stylistician with transferable skills as the analysis is made on the basis of models and basic assumptions. The skill is transferable because feminist stylistics draws analytical tools from Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), Cognitive Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The basic assumptions in these fields are relevant and influential. Some basic assumptions of SFL, which have influenced feminist stylistics include:

- ◆ the existence of a strong relation between language and social force. Social forces determine language and language in turn has an impact on society;
- ◆ language is much a part of society serving ideational, interpersonal and textual functions;
- ◆ language is a form of social action;
- ◆ language and texts are integrated into our social world (Mills, 1995, p. 13)

Key tools such as coherence, agency and transitivity choices are drawn into feminist stylistics from SFL. SFL is not only fundamental to feminist stylistics analysis, but also helpful for the clear understanding of CL and CDA. Both CL and CDA have in turn contributed to feminist stylistics. Background concepts drawn from CR to feminist stylistics analysis include:

- ◆ language is not a transparent carrier of meaning;
- ◆ society impregnates language with meaning which can be negative, oppressive, restrictive and dehumanising ;

- ◆ social structure determines the form and content of language;
- ◆ language is a social phenomenon. It serves to confirm, consolidate, control , establish and maintain a system;
- ◆ language influences the linguistic behaviour of writers;
- ◆ Stylistic choices are determined by social forces rather than individual ones (Mills, 1995, pp. 10-12).

As Fowler (1986) puts it, language is not only an instrument of socialisation, but also a source of knowledge:

The meanings of the words in a language are the community's store of established knowledge. A child learns the values and the preoccupations of its culture largely by learning the language: language is the chief instrument of socialization, which is the process by which a person is, willy-nilly, moulded into conformity with the established system of beliefs of the society into which s/he happens to be born. Language gives knowledge, and allows knowledge to be transmitted from person to person. But, this knowledge is traditional, not innovative, for language is a stabilising, stereotyping mode of communication (Fowler, 1986, p. 19).

From critical linguistics, feminist stylistics draws tools such as passivisation, nominalisation, transitivity and thematisation (Mills, 1995, p. 11). How ideology is communicated in a text can be analysed following passivisation, nominalisation, transitivity choices and thematisation. CDA, which is a relevant research tool in social sciences and humanities, provides feminist stylistics with relevant tools. While defining CDA, Verdonk (2002) writes:

...texts-in all texts-are, consciously or unconsciously, motivated by particular value systems and beliefs, and that the resulting discourses are, therefore, always presented from some ideological perspectives. This politicisation is the business of what variously called Critical Language Study, Critical Linguistics or critical discourse analysis. ... They (people) have lost this awareness as a result of constant exposure to dominant norms, value systems, and beliefs which are linguistically mediated in the discourses of powerful political, social, and cultural institutions such as government, the law, education, the press, and the world of advertising (p. 75).

To analyse and comprehend a text following CDA, Fairclough provides three dimensions:

- ◆ The first dimension sees discourse as a text. It can be analysed using vocabulary (e.g. wording, metaphor), grammar (e.g. transitivity, modality), cohesion (e.g. conjunction, schemata) and text structure (e.g. episoding, turn taking).
- ◆ The second dimension considers discourse as a discursive practice. Discourse is produced, circulated, distributed and consumed in the society. This dimension can be analysed looking into speech acts, coherence and intertextuality in the text.
- ◆ Lastly, discourse is a social practice. Discourse features ideological effects and hegemonic processes. It can be viewed from intertextuality, which shows the way discourse is represented, respoken, or rewritten in texts. CDA makes it transparent so that change and intervention can be made (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, pp. 441-442).

Following these dimensions, CDA can be used to analyse power relations, ideology, inequality, dominance, discrimination and stylistic choices

available to the writer, how texts address the reader and how readers are positioned in the text. The argument here is feminist stylistics has its own theoretical framework, methods and objectives. The methodological skill can be transferred to analyse sexist language and gender not only in poetry but also in other literary forms.

The tasks below were designed so that awareness can be created in EFL/ESL classrooms for the students to use gender free language.

1. How do the literary writers in your own country use syntax to subjugate women in the literature?
2. How do the writers present the various body parts of women in their literary works? Why?
3. Who is the source of vision in the works? Why?
4. How do the writers use language to state the social role of the female character in the poem? Why?
5. How is language used to state the social role of male character in the texts? Why?

3. Research Methods: A Summary

Research has shown that SC can be transferred from L_1 to an EFL communication situation. The proper social ability to apologise, compliment, take turns, agree and disagree or complain appropriately can be transferred from the mother tongue to the foreign language context. FS, therefore, is the proper tool to unlock the complexities inherent in sexist language in this regard. FS develops the use of context dependent language, figures of speech, speech acts, politeness and cooperativeness markers and gendered sentences which can reduce the effectiveness of communication. Failure in proper gender free language use also implies failure in communication.

Testing and developing gender-free language competence is essential because proper gender-free language use promotes effective communication. Gender free language use should be taught because it is culturally specific.

To achieve the objectives of this research and justify the experiment objectively, the following procedures were followed:

A. Conducting a pre-test

Before introducing the feminist stylistics teaching method, a pre-test was conducted among students under the control and experimental class. The purpose was to validate the test and instruments.

B. Carrying out the experiment

FS and active learning methods were integrated to teach Lulit Kebede's 'New Generation' and Wossen Mulatu's 'Tonight'. Both poets are young Ethiopian writers who have begun experimenting with poetry in English. The poems are simple and short. In the experimental class, the following focus areas were included while teaching the poems selected:

- a. Context : context of utterance, context of culture, context of reference and implicature .
- b. Lexical analysis: generic pronouns, negative descriptions and address forms.
- c. Syntactic analysis: proverbs, metaphors, jokes, humour, transitivity choices and passivisation.
- d. Discourse analysis: character description, role of female characters in texts, fragmentation, focalisation and schema.

C. Conducting the post-test

The focus areas of the pre-test were repeated and given as the post-test both to the experimental and control class. For example, in the test students

were asked to classify sentences into sexist or neutral. Out of ten gender free and sexist sentences in the test, students classified the following as sexist:

1. Each student must have his notebook with him in class.
2. A Senator who cannot finish his term of office timely should not compete again.
3. Each student must hand in his/her homework on Thursday.
4. The nurse awoke her patient.
5. A truck driver should plan his route carefully.

The experimental class also classified the following sentences as gender free:

1. A student should meet with his /her advisor.
2. A fire-fighter died on the spot.
3. A police officer should care for the people.
4. A postal worker should work sincerely.
5. Early man used a system of gestures to communicate

The test also included questions such as the following:

1. Which one of the following power relations is expressed and implied in the poem?

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| A. Hegemony | D. Discrimination |
| B. Inequality | E. All |
| C. Dominance | F. None |

2. State the social role of the female character in the poem.
3. State the social role of the male character in the poem.

4. Give examples of simile from your own culture that people often use to talk about women.
5. Give examples of metaphorical expressions from your own culture that are often used by people to talk about women.

Following the procedures above, a feminist stylistics model of teaching poetry was integrated with the communicative language teaching (CLT) tasks so that an intriguing environment was recreated in the classroom for the students to develop sociolinguistic competence. The current project was an integral part of four other stylistics research projects. It was carried out on the basis of an experimental research design following a mixed research method for administering a class test and questionnaire. A total of 190 students (63.3%) were selected from the population of 300 students in various programmes of the Department of English and Other Languages at Adama University, Ethiopia through a systematic sampling procedure and using a sampling frame. These students were again classified into experimental groups (95) and control groups (95) following a systematic sampling method. The following section presents the results of the experiment.

4. A feminist stylistic analysis of selected poems

This section presents a feminist stylistics analysis and a classroom presentation of two poems: 'New Generation' and 'Tonight'. The poems were purposefully selected as they were written by women. They also exemplify gender problems and how sexist language is used. The classroom presentation was conducted focusing on four interrelated levels: a) context analysis, b) lexical analysis, c) syntactic analysis and d) a critical discourse

analysis (CDA). The classroom experimentation and the analysis of the poems were conducted with following major objectives, namely to:

- re-examine poetic language in light of sexist language use;
- change the structure and ways of thinking towards sexist language use;
- raise the consciousness of EFL/ESL students towards using gender free language;
- test and develop the sociolinguistic competence of EFL/ESL learners of poetry.

4.1. Lulit Kebede's 'New Generation'

Step One: First silently and critically read the poem below

New Generation	Blowing over her
By Lulit Kebede	dancing eyes
Every heart melts	That spark like
When she smiles	twinkling stars
Snow white are her teeth	Her skin so soft
Teeth	A complexion so
Lips like a red rose	perfect
With an alluring	Her beauty like a full
fragrance	moon
Calling the butterflies	Glittering in dark night
From early spring fields	Her body, long and
Silk is her hair	clean
Galloping like a wild	Swimming like a swan
Horse	She really is a beauty
	queen

Then why	Living in a world that has never been hers
Why some doubt her beauty	Adopting all foreign behaviours
Saying that she is a Fairy	Habits, cursed by her ancestors
Avoiding reality, living in vanity	Abused beauty they say With no performed duty
With a mind so empty	Just a cover only pretty
With a heart lacking Purity	Where is she to share her difference
Her conscious fighting with its own Identity	To make it a better place
Imitating alien Personality	Source: Lulit K. and Wossen M. (2004. pp.32-34)
Forgetting her nationality	

Lulit and Wossen published *The Ribbon of the Heart*, a collection of poems, in a context where the educational qualification, experience and cost of publication do not favour women writers. The country also has a handful of women writers who are experimenting and writing poetry in English. The changing situation of Ethiopia has allowed the growth of these flowers in the desert. Lulit's 'New Generation', a poem in this publication, is a reflection of the changing ideological, educational and economic landscape of a growing nation. Written in the context of a changing patriarchal society, the context of the poem, lexical choice, syntactic structures and its discursal elements are interpreted and presented to the ELT classes.

A. Context in the poem

In the interpretation of context, feminist stylistics includes the context of production and reception. This allows the inclusion of the responses of students. With this common agreement, the following task was given:

1. Describe place and time in the poem.
2. Describe the cultural values cherished and criticised in the poem.
3. What is the main topic of the poem?
4. Describe the hidden motives of the writer. Have you made any inferences after reading the poem?

These leading questions were designed to lead the way for the discussion of the context of utterance, the context of culture, the context of reference and implicature.

In the interpretation of the context of utterance in the poem, students were advised to describe the physical environment, the location of the participants, the means of communication and time markers in the poem. Linguistic markers of time, place and person were considered as indicators of the context of utterance in the poem. Time and place indexicals are less pervasively used compared with person indexicals in the poem. Students were, therefore, informed to rely on clues in the poem to describe the time and place of the poem.

The setting of the poem is contemporary Ethiopia. The poem presents a modern girl as the personal pronouns "she" and "her" exemplify several times. Elders are represented by "some" and "they". The conflict is between a modern girl with foreign values and elders who cherish traditional cultural norms.

Students were informed that the context of culture is the hallmark of social, cultural and economic conventions in the poem. The girl adopts

foreign cultural practices, breaking away from the indigenous cultural values:

Lips like a red rose
 With an alluring fragrance
 Calling the butterflies
 from early spring fields
 Silk is her hair

The poet describes the artificial silk hair, lipstick and perfume which the girl uses to alter her natural and indigenous identity. The way the girl smiles, the colour of her lips and impure heart have been the butt of social criticism:

Living in a world that has never been hers
 Adopting all foreign behaviours
 Habits cursed by her ancestors
 Abused beauty they say

Her lack of national sentiment and adoption of alien cultural values have not been accepted by the elders. As a result, she is criticised.

The 'context of reference' deals with the topic of the poem. The poem is about a cultural crisis that the country is facing. The young, devoid of traditional wisdom, follow foreign values. The old, ignoring foreign values, cherish the local culture. The following lines imply the views of the elders:

With a mind so empty
 With a heart lacking purity
 Her conscious fighting with its own Identity

Imitating alien personality

Forgetting her nationality

To the dismay of the elders, the new generation of Ethiopia, represented by the girl in the poem, blindly adopts foreign behaviour. The poem therefore describes the decline of traditional values cherished by the elders of the poem.

Impicature refers to the knowledge and the hidden motives of the poet that the reader infers from the context of the poem. It can be inferred from the poem that the modern society has created the situation for the young lady to adopt foreign behaviour. To the extreme disappointment of the elders, the contemporary modern society cherishes artificial behaviour. It is the artificial silk hair, red lips, soft body and perfume that the modern society cherishes. There comes strong conflict between modernity and the expectations of the traditional society. The circumstances are compelling enough to disregard any concern the lady may have for the elders.

B. Lexical analysis

This section deals with the analysis of pronouns, negative description, sexist collocation and worldview. The words in the poem reflect a world-view maintained by the society. To guide the analysis, students were given the following task:

1. Give examples of words which perpetuate a particular world-view.
2. How does the poet use pronouns?
3. Why doesn't the poet use generic pronouns?
4. Discuss the lexical items which are chiefly employed to describe the girl negatively.

Often the pronoun "he" and the generic term "man" represent both sexes. It can be seen that such use of pronouns does not exist in this poem.

However, students were advised to replace the pronouns "she" and "her" in the poem with "he" and "his". Students were asked to report their feelings of the poem and other observations. They reported that the entire flavour of the poem is lost when the feminine touch of the poem is changed. Even the girls in each experimental group felt that a description of the body parts of a boy as in the poem is not expected. They indicated that the lexical collocation referring to the body parts such as 'heart', 'teeth', 'lips', 'hair' and 'eyes' is not a common way of describing a man. It is his masculinity, leadership qualities, courage and manhood which are often described in their own culture. They have not read any work of literature even in the local language which describes the lips or the eyes of a man.

Though the poet does not use generic pronouns and address forms to imply sexism, there are examples of negative description of the girl in the poem. The girl is a "beauty queen". The word "queen" is a sexist expression. Her body parts are compared with natural phenomena. Her teeth are "snow" white. Her lips are compared with a 'red rose'. Her hair is 'silk'. Her eyes look like a twinkling star. Most significant of all, the following description is sexually appealing:

Gallop like a wild horse
Blowing over her dancing eyes
That like twinkling stars
Her skin so soft
A complexion so perfect
Her beauty like a full moon

The poet describes the eyes of the girl which are dancing and her body which is soft. Every word expresses her sexual attractiveness, not her power of reasoning or rationality. Therefore, 'wild horse, dancing eyes and twinkling stars' are negative descriptions which exemplify only the sexual

roles of a woman. Readers can also notice that this negative description is unconsciously chosen by the author.

C. Syntax and gender free language use

This section presents the syntactic structure of the poem and searches for the meaning of proverbs, metaphors, jokes, transitivity choices and passivisation. The objective of the analysis and experimentation is to enable students see how sentences are inundated with figures of speech and proverbs which work against women. The stylistic practice helps them use language consciously in social contexts properly and consciously and see the impacts of sexist structures. Proper use of syntax in social context in English is also believed to improve their socio-linguistic competence of their mother tongue. To guide the discussion, the following questions were given to the experimental class:

5. Why does the poet use metaphorical expressions?
6. Why does the poet prefer syntactic structures inundated with simile?
7. Why doesn't the poet use transitive and passive verbs pervasively in the poem?
8. Give examples of proverbs from your own culture which are often used to belittle the roles or the greatness of women.

The beauty of the girl in the poem is made more conspicuous describing her against the back ground of other objects. Students reported that the following metaphors were used to glorify the glamorous image of the girl in the poem:

9. Every heart melts.
10. Silk is her hair.
11. Glittering in dark.

12. She is a beauty queen.
13. She is a fairy.

The qualities of the girl are made vivid through metaphorical expressions. She is compared with butter, silk, stars, the moon and a horse. All are negative and inherently sexist.

Compared to sentences flooded with metaphorical ideas, the poet more pervasively employs sentences charged and loaded with simile. The simile also magnifies the beauty of the girl as in the following examples:

14. Lips like a red rose.
15. Galloping like a wild horse.
16. (Eyes) that spark like twinkling stars.
17. Her beauty like a full moon.
18. Swimming like a swan.

The use of simile has reduced the use of transitive and passive verbs though the subject of many of the sentences is the girl.

In the poem, the pronoun "she" represents the girl who is the subject of all the sentences in the first part. None of the verbs are passive or active in this part of the poem. Instead, the poet pervasively uses sentences with complements. The complements are gerunds, for example, 'galloping', 'blowing', 'calling', 'living', 'swimming', 'imitating' and 'forgetting'. The gerunds are used to describe the activities of the girl. But the activities are subordinated. The poet has also found the gerunds in subordinating clauses more convenient to compare all the actions of the girl with butterflies, stars, a foreign personality and dark night. The girl is the agent of her bodily experiences, not the world outside. She is not an active agent in the world. Whatever she does is referred to her beauty. The lines below are appropriate comments of elders:

Abused beauty they say
With no performed duty
Just a cover only pretty
Where is she to share her difference
To make it a better place.

According to the elders, she is not an agent in changing the situation of either other fellow creatures “to make it a better place.”

A. Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

This section deals with how language is used to describe women’s characters, roles of the girl, fragmentation, focalisation and schema. Language is not only a means of communication but an expression of hegemony, discrimination, inequality and domination. To investigate language use, the questions below were raised in the class:

1. How does the poet describe the girl in the poem?
2. What are the major roles of the female character in the poem? How about male characters?
3. How is the girl represented?
4. Who is the source of vision and culture? What is the position of the girl compared to the elders?
5. Is the girl a sexual object or a change agent? Who dominates whom?

The first impression of reading the poem helps us to see the beauty of the girl in the poem. The question is: Why does the poet describe the girl in that way? The girl is described to appear sexually attractive:

Every heart melts
When she smiles

Snow-white is her teeth
Lips like a red rose.

It is the perfume, silk hair and lipstick which are foregrounded to glorify the artificial beauty of the girl. Her teeth, heart and lips are negatively described. Her physical beauty is contrasted with the emptiness of her mind in the lines below:

With a mind so empty
With a heart lacking purity
Her conscience fighting with its own Identity
Imitating alien personality

She is described as an artificial object who is imitating foreign behaviours. She does not own any Ethiopian feminine qualities at all.

Fragmentation is seen from three perspectives: a) fragmentation of the girl into anatomical parts, b) comparison of the body parts of the girl with nature and c) presentation of the girl as a consumable good. At the outset, the description of the various anatomical parts of the girl looks attractive. However, the description of her teeth, lips, hair, eyes and skin does affect the wholeness of her personality. She is fragmented into parts. To our dissatisfaction, her body parts are not only fragmented but also compared to a 'rose' 'butterflies', 'spring fields', 'wild horse', 'twinkling stars', 'full moon', 'dark night' and 'swan'.

The fundamental question is why does the poet fragment the girl and compare the body parts with nature or animals or natural occurrences. Culturally, the poet knows that this is the customary way to magnify the beauty of a woman. Deep inside the poem, however, the comparison of the girl with a wild horse, swan and butterflies belittles the qualities and roles of the girl. Deep inside again, comparing the girl with a rose, silk, perfumes

and makeup glorifies the artificial beauty of the girl. It is not her reasoning power and her social contributions which are described. The girl has to use various forms of artificial makeups to enhance her beauty artificially. She has to be sexually appealing. However, this will bring her to the level of a consumable sex item. The elders do not acknowledge her attractiveness or her fertility role.

With no performed duty
 Just a cover only pretty
 Where is she to share her difference?
 To make a better place.

According to the elders, her contribution as an agent of change to make the country a better place is negligible. The elders are the sources of vision and resourcefulness. Her new maternity role is not recognized. Her ideas are less acceptable than the old ideas of the elders. The syntax is inundated with roles, visions, ideas and values which glorify the elders, a collection of old MEN. It is the hegemony, segregation, discrimination and patriarchal philosophy which inundate the day to day syntax. The syntax is full of ideas which magnify the greatness of men.

Often proverbs are used to open speeches in traditional cultures. In the words of Achebe, “Proverbs are palm wine with which words are eaten.” They are repositories of the wisdom of the society often compressed to justify one’s position. Sometimes traditional people use proverbs to justify the truth of their statements. The proverbs below were collected by the students, who also believed that these proverbs demean the roles of women.

- ◆ A man sent by a woman is never afraid of death.
- ◆ To trust a woman is to hold fog.
- ◆ Behind a successful man there is always a woman.

- ◆ Empty vessels make the most noise.
- ◆ A desperate man marries a pregnant woman.
- ◆ He who has a wife has given hostage to his wealth.
- ◆ A woman and a glass are always in danger.
- ◆ A dog is wiser than a woman; it does not bark at its master.
- ◆ A worthy woman is far more precious than jewels, strength and dignity are her clothing.
- ◆ Women's wisdom is as long as their nose.
- ◆ Wise women ruin cattle deals.
- ◆ A bow drawn by a woman won't shoot.
- ◆ The origin of women's wisdom is greed.
- ◆ Women know the ways of women.
- ◆ Women have twelve horns.

These were proverbs collected by the students. Discussions were conducted on how traditional cultures belittle the roles of women through sexist language, though the women try hard to change and contribute to the social and economic system.

4.2. Wossen Mulatu's 'Tonight' : A feminist stylistics analysis

Step One: Critically read the poem below.

Tonight By Wossen Mulatu (March 2003)

Hope you'll hold her tight	And solve all her puzzles
And tell her it's alright	Hope you'll hold her hands
Hope you'll kiss her cheeks	And feel her with bliss
Hope you'll stand close by her	Hope she won't be in the

side	streets again
And protect her from the cold	
Hope you'll embrace her	Selling herself to a stranger
And tell her that you love her	Hope you'll find a substitute
	To the forced prostitute
Hope she won't show up nude	
And expose herself to the	Hope tonight
crowd	You will make her see the
Hope won't abuse her beauty	light
And leave her for the hungry	(Source: Lulit and Wossen,
Hope you'll dry her tears fast	2004, p.52).
Hope make her forget the past	

'Tonight' presents prostitution as one of the most critical social problems. It has existed for decades in Ethiopia. As implied in the poem, prostitution, which is pervasively disseminated in almost all cities of Ethiopia, has become the last choice for many jobless young girls. It has also become the source of other multiple social evils. An outstanding question is who should end prostitution? Are there options for women to work diligently to free themselves from prostitution? Has the society bestowed visionary and entrepreneurship qualities to women so as to free themselves? Wossen's 'Tonight' seeks solution to these critical problems. Composed in 2003, the poem also documents a social problem of many African countries. It also reflects how language reflects the beliefs of the society in solving social problems. In this section, analysis of context in the poem, lexical patterns, syntactic structures and discourse features are interpreted in the class. The objective of the experimentation is to test and develop students' sociolinguistic competence.

A. Context in Wossen's 'Tonight'

Written in the context of contemporary Ethiopia where the government strategically plans and uses literature to fight AIDS and prostitution, the poem suggests a solution. In this context where the media covers social problems, students were familiar with the problems of prostitution. With the assumption that students could bring their background experience to the classroom scenario, the following questions were raised. Active learning methods such as hot seating, thought bubbling and pyramiding were also used to generate ideas.

1. Is prostitution a critical social problem at all in Ethiopia? Does the context of the poem reflect the critical nature of the problem?
2. Describe the views of the society towards a prostitute in your culture. How do your people address a prostitute? What kind of language do they use?
3. How do you find the topic of the poem? Do you think the title reflects the message of the poem?
4. What have you inferred from the poem? Is there any hidden motive?
5. What should be done to advance gender-free language classrooms and society?

To structure the discussion, students were informed about hot seating, pyramiding and thought bubbling. Then small groups were formed. Each group leaders was informed to include at least one female student in the group.

While analysing the context of utterance, students were instructed to describe the location of the addressor (the poet), the addressee (the man) and the subject (the prostitute). The title of the poem, time, place and person

indexicals were considered as the linguistic indicators of the context of utterance.

In the poem, the pronouns “she” and “her” represent the prostitute who is the main subject of the conversation between the poet and the man. The prostitute is assumed to be in a cold street on that night. ‘Tonight’, the title of the poem, therefore, serves as a linguistic indicator of the time of the poem. It also shows the urgency of the problem.

In the Ethiopian cultural context, conversation between a man and a prostitute about sexual affair with the prostitute is a private issue. It can be inferred from the personal nature of the topic of the discussion that the poet’s advice to the man has taken place in a very secluded environment. However, the future position and location of the man and the prostitute are suggested in the following lines:

Hope you’ll hold her hands
 And feel her with bliss
 Hope you’ll stand close by her side
 And protect her from the cold

Warm and closer relations are suggested. It is warmth and love which can rescue the woman from life in the cold streets. The place where she frequently goes is a cold street:

Hope make her forget the past
 Hope she won't be in the streets again
 Selling herself to a stranger

It is during the night on the streets that the man is expected to meet the prostitute.

The context of culture deals with the social, cultural and economic interrelations between the man and the prostitute in the poem. It can be observed from the context of the poem that the very idea of prostitution signifies the absence of better economic options for women in Ethiopia. It is the last choice that the country can offer. Culturally, prostitution is not an acceptable job. Therefore, the prostitute faces social discrimination and economic subjugation. The lines below imply the fear of the poet:

Hope she won't show up nude
And expose herself to the crowd

Neither her nudity nor her “profession” is acceptable in the society. Consequently, the rehabilitation of the woman to the socially and culturally acceptable practices can be the solution. Marriage, which is a culturally acceptable practice, can be the solution only if the man in the poem gives his consent.

The context of reference refers to the major topic of the poem. The poem is all about the economic bondage of the woman under prostitution. The prostitute is the subject of the conversation between the poet and the man who are proposing a solution. The man is advised to rescue the prostitute as the lines below signify:

Hope you'll dry her tears fast
Hope make her forget the past
Hope she won't be in the street again

The man is persistently advised to rescue the woman and let her forget the past because the woman is involved in a culturally and socially unacceptable practice. Finding a stable life and life partner is one of her greatest challenges.

The analysis of the context of utterance, context of culture and context of reference can help us infer the hidden motive of the poet. Why does the poet advise the man to love a prostitute? The man is advised to hold the prostitute tight, kiss her cheeks and solve her puzzles. He is the one who makes her forget her past and gives her solace and protection. All these can be practical if the man marries the prostitute. Therefore, it is marriage, which is implied throughout the poem, that is the major solution for prostitution in Ethiopia. It is the man who is still the solution. Man saves the woman. It is the message implied in the poem.

B. A lexical analysis of 'Tonight'

The lexical analysis of the poem mainly focuses on the use of pronouns, reiteration, collocation and lexical cohesion. To achieve the objectives of this subsection, the following questions were given to the class:

1. Identify the lexical items which negatively describe the woman in the poem.
2. How does the poet use pronouns in the poem?
3. Does the lexical collocation referring to the body parts of the woman bring about any effect?
4. How does the poet organize the entire text?

As in the tasks under 'New Generation', students were informed to replace all feminine pronouns in the poem 'Tonight' with masculine pronouns. All groups were asked to reflect on their impression after replacing the pronouns. Almost all groups reflected that the replacement of pronouns does not work effectively. This is mainly because a man cannot be a prostitute in the contemporary Ethiopian culture. The replacement of the pronoun makes the man the object of almost all the sentences. This belittles the roles and practices of a man in the society. In traditional cultures, the

man often becomes the solution for many cultural and economic problems of the woman, not vice versa.

Key content lexical items also are patterned to glorify the practices of the man. Content words such as ‘kiss’, ‘hold’, ‘embrace’, ‘love’, ‘feel’, ‘fell’ and ‘stand close’ in the first stanza are used as collocations referring to human emotions. These are verbs which magnify his roles in providing warmth, care and protection. This consistent use of transitive verbs also organically cohere the first portion of the poem.

Negative lexical items are also used to belittle the social roles of the woman in the poem. Lexical items such as ‘prostitute’, ‘nude’, ‘expose’, ‘streets’, ‘selling’ and ‘substitute’ are negative lexical items which destroy the positive image of the woman in the poem.

Lexical items “hope” and “you” are reiterated in the poem again and again to glorify the benevolent practices of the man. His name is repeated like God in a prayer to give “hope” and ‘solace’ to the woman. This reiteration, however, is stylistically significant because it brings coherence to the entire poem. The reiteration maintains unity of ideas.

C. Syntax and gender free language use

Unlike Lulit Kebede’s ‘New Generation’, Wossen Mulatu’s ‘Tonight’ is not charged and flooded with figures of speech about women. Wossen in this poem finds metaphor and simile inappropriate to present the situation of a woman. Wossen’s aim is not comparison, but action and agency which subjugate the women to an inferior position. Therefore, the interpretation of transitivity, passivisation, normalisation, agency and thematisation can expose the working of language against women. Wossen’s syntax is ignited with ideas which glorify man as the doer of all good practices. Man is a saviour. Man is a bread winner. The following ten lines of the poem are changed into passive constructions so that students can see how sentences reduce a woman to a passive position:

1. Hope you'll hold her tight. (Man is active.)
Hoped she will be held tight. (Woman is passive.)
2. And tell her it's alright. (Man is active)
And she's told it's alright. (Passive – woman)
3. Hope you'll kiss her cheeks. (Man is active.)
Hoped her cheeks will be kissed. (Passive – woman)
4. And solve all her puzzles. (Man is active.)
And all her puzzles [are] solved. (Passive – woman)
5. Hope you'll hold her hand. (Man is active.)
Hoped her hands will be held. (Passive – woman)
6. And feel her hands with bliss. (Man is active.)
And with bliss her hands [are] felt. (Passive – woman)
7. Hope you'll stand close by her side. (Man is active.)
8. And protect her from the cold. (Man is active.)
And she's protected from the cold. (Passive – woman)
9. Hope you'll embrace her. (Man is active.)
Hoped she will be embraced. (Passive-woman)
10. And tell her that you love her. (Man is active.)
And she is told that she's loved. (Woman- passive)

The first stanza of the poem contains ten sentences with the man as the subject and the woman or her body parts either as direct object or indirect object. Transitive verbs such as 'hold', 'tell', 'kiss', 'solve', 'feel' and 'embrace' signify that he is the agent of all the actions. He is the actor. He is presented as a problem solver, a lover, an informer and as a saviour. In all these sentences, the woman is the object of all the active sentences. She is the victim and the source of evil – prostitution. Neither the poet (who is a woman) nor the prostitutes are change agents. Even the poet doesn't except advising the man to rescue the prostitute. Therefore, awareness of

passivisation and transitivity should contribute to the sociolinguistic competence so that EFL/ESL students use sentence structures properly.

D. A critical discourse analysis of 'Tonight'

Critical discourse analysis investigates how language is used to describe the woman, identify the social roles of women, fragmentation, focalisation and schema in the poem. The following questions were raised in the experimental class:

1. How does the poet describe the woman?
2. What are the major roles of the female character in the poem?
3. How does the poet present the female body?
4. Who is the source of information and vision?
5. How does the poet position the reader?
6. Who are the victims and the victors in the poem? Why?

As in 'New Generation', 'Tonight' directly describes the physical and psychological appearance of the women in the poem. It is through the actions that we probe into the image of the woman. The physical environment and the socio-economic context help the reader build a different image of the woman. Her nudity and sources of income worry the poet:

Hope she won't show up nude
And expose herself to the crowd.

As she does not like her source of income, she cries and needs to shroud her disastrous past. She is also negatively described as the one resorting to flesh trade for survival:

Hope make her forget the past
Hope she won't be in the streets again
Selling herself to a stranger

This negative description not only presents a sexually appealing image of the woman but also the dark context in which the prostitute perseveres.

Fragmentation investigates the presentation of female body parts and the representation of women as a consumable and passive object. As indicated earlier, since the poem is not figurative like in Lulit Kebede's 'New Generation', there are few references to the body parts of the woman in the poem. The lines below make direct reference to the body parts of the prostitute:

Hope you'll hold her tight
And tell her it's alright
Hope you'll kiss her cheeks
And solve her puzzles
Hope you'll hold her hands

However, indirect references are made to her crying eyes and nude body. Since nudity and flesh trade are not acceptable practices, she is discriminated against socially. She is a victim of economic inequality and cultural practices.

Focalisation presents the position of the woman and the degree of her persistence in breaking away from her situation and the positioning of the reader. In the poem, man is presented as the sole source of information and vision. It is the man who can marry the prostitute and solve all her problems. It is a male oriented process of looking and verbalising. The woman suffers the consequences of economic inequality, cultural subjugation and ideological dominance.

We are positioned in the text as readers who believe that the man is the saviour of the woman. Readers follow the syntax which is charged and inundated with ideas which reflect the economic and the cultural supremacy of the man. Language is used to hide the reality. Students are recommended to investigate the deep and surface structure of the sentences which are hegemonic and belittle the roles of woman.

5. Major findings

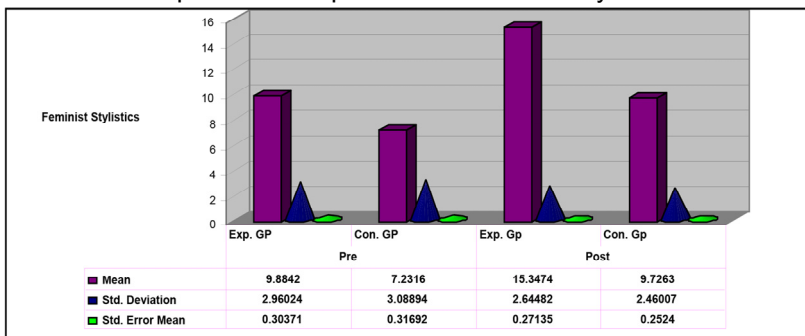
It was interesting to observe the improvements made by the experimental group in using gender-free vocabulary. Some of the sexist linguistic items which were taken in stride previously while addressing women now are taken as derogatory. Awareness was created so that words should be chosen and used with caution because all words do not mean the same to all girls and boys in the same classroom. The following are major findings observed. Compared to the students in the control group, students in the experimental class:

1. Identified negative descriptions which are sexist in nature correctly.
2. Noticed address forms which are sexist.
3. Identified metaphorical expressions from their own culture which belittle the roles and contributions of women in general clearly.
4. Described the inferior positions given to women figures in two poems. In the poems, men are visionary and resourceful and women are emotional.
5. Identified active and passive constructions which are written to glorify men as agents and women as objects clearly.

6. Described the roles of nature in glorifying the sexual attractiveness of women in the poems.
7. Interpreted the various body parts of women. They commented on the fragmentation of body parts and the comparison of women with nature in the poem.
8. Distinguished sexist sentences from gender free constructions in the list of 10 mixed sentences.

Students in the experimental group took the last module on feminist stylistics. The main objective of the module was to find out the pedagogic relevance of feminist stylistics in teaching Ethiopian poetry and the development of a gender free EFL classroom. Both the treatment and comparison groups took pre-tests which were scored out of 20. The bar graph and the table below present a summary of the t-test result for pre-and post-tests result for the feminist stylistics module.

Independent samples test for feminist stylistics



		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre	Equal variances assumed	9.113	.003	2.974	188	.003	1.33684	.44944	.45026	2.22343
	Equal variances not assumed			2.974	176.935	.003	1.33684	.44944	.44990	2.22379
Post	Equal variances assumed	.269	.604	8.651	188	.000	3.15789	.36504	2.43779	3.87800
	Equal variances not assumed			8.651	186.948	.000	3.15789	.36504	2.43776	3.87803

The bar graph above presents the mean test score for sample groups, standard deviation and standard error mean. As the mean pre-test score shows in the graph, both the control and experimental groups performed almost similarly in their feminist stylistics pre-test which was calculated out of 20. The experimental mean score, which is 9.8842, is a little bigger than the control mean score of 7.2316. Consequently, the t-test result shows that the existence of a mean difference of 1.33684 is not statistically significant. Therefore, there is no significance difference between the mean test scores of the two groups.

On the other hand, the table above summarises the t-test results for both pre- and post- tests for the feminist stylistics module. The t-value of the feminist stylistics post-test as presented in the table above is 8.651. On the other hand, the table value of t-critical is 1.96 with 188 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the t-value of 8.651 exceeds the t-critical value of 1.96 for a two tailed test at 0.05 level of significance for 188 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the

feminist stylistics method of teaching poetry does contribute to the development of gender free language use in an EFL context.

6. Conclusions

A gender free presentation of language focusing on four interrelated levels namely: context analysis, lexical analysis, syntactic analysis and a critical discourse analysis (CDA) can aid the awareness of language use. Language should be used properly in classes, especially while addressing girls. A teacher can deliver gender free English lectures with the objective of using language in light of sexist language use, changing the structures and ways of thinking towards gender free language use, raising the consciousness of EFL/ESL students towards gender difference, testing and developing the sociolinguistic competence of EFL/ESL learners of literature. Gender free language classrooms can create conducive learning environments for girls' education.

The t-value of the feminist stylistics post-test was 8.651. On the other hand, the table value of t-critical was 1.96 with 188 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the t-value of 8.651 exceeded the t-critical value of 1.96 for the two tailed test at 0.05 level of significance for 188 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis is rejected. The t-test analysis also showed that the p-value of the post-test was .000 which was less than 0.05. In both cases, the hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the feminist stylistics method of teaching poetry does contribute to the development of gender free language use in an EFL context.

This research recommends that lecturers need to broaden the development of gender free language use in an ELF context through Ethiopian literature in English. Aboriginal literary language is inundated with expressions which belittle the great roles of women in general. Texts are flooded by

socio-cultural norms, by ideologies, by history, by economic forces, by fashions, by gender and racial stereotyping, as Mills (1995) puts it. The aboriginal literature is the repository of all social practices against women. Language reflects general practices about gender differences, values and practices which can unconstructively influence the self-representation of women. Language is not gender free. Sexist language is pervasive in the various cultures. Therefore, an EFL teacher should expose the workings of gender at different levels in text, influence students to shape the boundaries of discourse, change structures and ways of their thinking, draw the relationship between lexical items and discourse, and develop new models of writing. The teacher has to make students re-examine the texts in light of gender using aboriginal literature.

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