"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players”  
From As You Like It (2/7, 139-143)

1 Prologue

1.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this dissertation is to investigate the language use of two groups of less-educated Turkish women in narrative/conversation situations among female friends on critical/taboo topics with special reference to cultural politeness norms, self-presentation styles, and linguistic strategies reflecting socio-psychological mechanisms. The main concern will be to show how sex talk of less-educated Turkish women reveal their agentive selves, and how their social roles as women in the society and as wives in the family are reflected in their linguistic practices by focusing on some systematic linguistic usages with the support of qualitative and quantitative analyses. With this purpose, cultural, societal and gender role of Turkish women and how these influence the way in which Turkish women perceive, experience and present their identities and give direction to speaker-oriented face management in a triple matrix of politeness FACEWORK, self-presentation and gender. Schiffrin (1996:170) emphasizes the complexity of the situation within a larger frame that has a room for both psychological and socio-cultural points of view: “The form of our stories (their textual structure), the content of our stories (what we tell about), and our story-telling behavior (how we tell our stories) are all sensitive indices not just of our personal selves, but also our social and cultural identities”. In other words, socio-historical constructions not only influence the way individuals define and act on their behaviors, but also organize and give meaning to sexual experience, through construction of sexual identities, definitions, regulations and ideologies. Persons are also considered to be the constructors of their historicity and knowledge in their lives assisted by the common discourses in their societies and cultures, together with their own life experiences.

A socialization perspective on gender can account for diversity within genders. For instance, differences in the gendered behaviors of upper class and working class women can be explained by systematically different socialization environments they may have experienced as children. In this respect, these implications are in contrast to the assumptions of essentialism, which states that all women and men are considered to be fundamentally alike due to biological reasons and therefore a change in pattern is impossible. From a socialization perspective, “gender thus is viewed as operating at the level of individual personality but in the
service of more general social control” (Howard and Hollander, 1997:29). This notion of socialization is particularly important for thinking about the way that individuals develop a range of gendered identities which will be activated and used strategically in different communities with different norms rather than describing a single gendered identity which correlates with one’s biological sex.

Our cognitive preconceptions of ourselves shape who we present ourselves to be; our preconceptions of others shape how we behave towards them. We behave differently with different people in different situations by dressing in different styles, by having different manners and social roles. In other words, we present particular selves to others for particular reasons. Goffman (1955, 1959, 1971) maintained that like actors on a stage, people in social situations manipulate the impressions they give off to manipulate others’ perceptions of them. As Goffman argued, every social situation is an active juggling of identities. Presentations of self are thus manifestations of social structure in face-to-face interaction as they alert others to one’s social positions even before interaction begins. I am particularly interested in the ways in which individuals manage their presentations of their gendered selves in a social situation. In contrast to general belief that “masculine” and “feminine” behaviors are simply automatic expressions of males’ and females’ underlying natures, under the term of “doctrine of natural expression”, Goffman (1976:7) claims that “expression in the main is not instinctive but socially learned and socially patterned… And this is so even though individuals come to employ expressions in what is sensed to be a spontaneous and unselfconscious way, that is, uncalculated, unfaked, natural”. Gender displays, then, are not so much representations of an innate possession or set of standard behaviors which is imposed upon the individual by society, but indications of actors’ ability to perform the culturally prescribed roles believed appropriate for males and females.

When this theorization of gender and impression management is extended to the analysis of linguistic politeness, it results in a move away from previous theoretical models, (BL (1987) (henceforth BL); Leech (1983); among others) whereby hearer-oriented individual speech acts are considered to be inherently polite or impolite, towards a more complex model of the way that impression management and speaker-oriented politeness strategies operate with gendered norms. In other words, holding such a multidimensional perspective proposes a broad range of phenomena to be analyzed. Therefore, an attempt will be made to combine socio-psychological theory (Schütz 1996, 1997, 1998a and 1998b) and the linguistic theory of politeness (BL, 1987). It is widely acknowledged (e.g. by Kasper, 1990; Chen, 2001; Thomas, 1995; Meier, 1995) that theories of linguistic politeness in the traditions of BL (1987) and Leech (1983) have been primarily concerned with speakers’ efforts to save the face of others by minimizing or compensating the effects of face-threatening acts on their face. In this study, I focus on Goffman’s original conceptualization of face as concerning primarily self-presentation. From this perspective, linguistic politeness theory can be usefully combined with the socio-psychological theory of self-presentation as developed by Schütz (1998) who proposes a speaker-oriented taxonomy of self-presentation styles, distinguishing assertive, offensive, defensive, and protective self-presentation. In doing so, this study places well-known work of BL on politeness and facework into a broader framework concerned with the analysis of different
facework strategies on speaker’s face account in spoken discourse. Hence, a platform is provided where the concept of face is elaborately studied beyond its familiar “western” milieu, and redefined in Turkish culture, where “East” and “West” connect and dissect both geographically and theoretically. This broader frame contributed to the understanding of self-presentation in and through talk in relation to social setting, context, cultural prescriptions and gender roles and cultural dimensions such as norms, values, orientations, traditions and collective experiences. In this way, I can portray a range of information on how displacement of self through linguistic choices and interactional style can locate a speaker in a triple matrix of cultural meanings, normative practices and social values that create social identity.

Based on Schütz’s statement (1998a:628) that “cultural prescriptions and gender roles are among the most important factors in constraining the possible variety of self-presentation”, this study hypothesizes that Turkish women’s identity norms and their social roles in the family and in the community give direction to their language use and thus their self-presentation styles in service of meeting social expectations. Since women’s sexuality is subordinated to men’s sexuality in Turkish culture, and since it is considered to be a potential risk of shame both for the family and for women’s virtue, women are inclined to employ a veil of silence around sexuality. If they speak on such topics, they tend to protect, maintain and enhance their social status, reputation and family honor by indirect, evasive and blurred expressions.

An empirical reason to initiate this study is that despite this large amount of interest, there has been little work on the question of how strategies of self-presentation are actually implemented in interaction and what their possible linguistic representations are. Indeed, many studies of self-presentation are experimental and/or depend on written data (Schmid and Fiedler, 1996; Schütz and Baumeister, 1999) and do not allow one to draw conclusions about how participants spontaneously go about the business of presenting themselves, and whether they employ systematic linguistic tools to maintain and protect their faces. In other words, there is a compelling necessity for examining the presentation of self and facework in spontaneous discourse.

In the following section, I will outline the framework of the study which is based on Goffman’s backstage and frontstage distinction.

1.2 Framework

The study is framed by Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1981) dramaturgical approach which is usually associated with Shakespeare’s “All the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players”. He analyzes how people interact in our everyday life with the mode of presentation employed by the actors and its meaning in the broader social context. Building on the metaphor of the dramatic stage, Goffman made a distinction between front region and back region. Accordingly, people have a notion of self to the extent that they present some sort of role to others. Goffman considers the notion of social self to be located within the social act performed in the front stage. “Front stage” stands for a performance visible to an audience through which actors produce and present an image of
themselves by contributing with arguments, values, judgments and so on. In contrast to the front stage, back stage can be regarded as an invisible preparation-arena of a social situation, like a makeup room of a theatre where the actors put on makeup, study on their lines and mimic in front of the mirror, concentrate on their role. It is a domain where information that is hidden in the front stage can be released. If the actors have been socialized into ideas of femininity and/or masculinility, social values, custom and traditions, these ideas should become embedded in our sense of self, our back stage where norms and cultural values can be regarded as the parts of its constitutives. Thus, we define “back stage” as the initiation platform for the cultural, social and linguistic knowledge that guides symbolic interactions, and “front stage” as the communicative practices through which social identities are exhibited and managed. This argument can be closely related to Bourdieu’s notion of “habitus”, a set of dispositions that direct the individual to act in certain ways. Bourdieu defines “habitus” as:

“systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor” (1990:53).

In his “theory of practice” Bourdieu (1977) aims to emphasize individual actions, encompassing what individuals do, feel or believe. The concept of habitus challenges the concept of free will, in that within a certain habitus at any one time, choices are not limitless—here are limited dispositions, or readiness for action. A person is not an autonomous creature, for there exists flexibility in a habitus, but there is no complete free will. According to Bourdieu, there are no external forces that guide individuals’ behaviors; rather what may come to stage as such external forces is really an “inbuilt mechanism” based on “habitus”, the individually internalized social history. For Bourdieu (1995:59) agreement and possibility of social-coordination is the outcome of this individually inbuilt feature, an “immanent law, inscribed in bodies by identical histories” and consequently, “the precondition not only for the coordination of practices but also for the practices of coordination”. Based on this argument, Eelen (2001:222) underlines the distinction between collective and individual historicity stating, “On the one hand, collective history creates a ‘common’ world in which each individual is embedded. On the other hand, each individual also has a unique individual history, and experiences the ‘common’ world from this unique position”. The roots of this distinction can be traced in Bourdieu’s (1977:72) explanation about the “passage from the opus operatum to the modus operandi, from statistical regularity or algebraic structure to the principle of the production of this order” where “opus operatum” stands for an ‘end result’, social reality causing a proper modus operandi (model of production). These two concepts display close parallelism with Goffman’s notion of back stage
and front stage in the sense of construction of ‘self’ and the social performance in line with the community values. While opus operatum is the socialization process in which both individual and collective historicity are created, sustained, and reinforced in the back stage, modus operandi corresponds to ‘social practice’ (see Eelen, 2001) taking place in front stage. Hence, it not only guides individuals’ integration in the social world and their performance in the form of social practice, but also functions as a source of their individuality.

This thesis considers respondents’ behavior as a process beginning in the back stage where they realize and acquire their statuses, roles and utilize available tools on their cultural palette to create appropriate impressions on others in the front stage. Hence, back stage is considered as a prerequisite step, an arena, which harbors cognitive, cultural and gender account of an individual and give direction to the front stage performances. The understanding at macro-societal level in the back stage draws on theories of social construction and symbolic interaction in line with a socio-cultural and gender account of Turkish culture. This aims to provide the background against which culturally sanctioned appropriate and polite behavior can be analyzed. The detailed analysis of reflections of linguistic choices in the form of evasive/indirect interactional style, cautious self-description in line with assertive, protective and defensive self-presentation styles in the front stage is given from the window of a new broader frame based on impression management theory and politeness theory.

1.2.1 Back stage

Goffman (1959:114) says “a back region is here that the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed”. Back stage is then an internalization phase through which social norms and cultural values are digested through individual practices. Going back to Goffman’s metaphor of drama, we can say that it is preparation arena where actors continually rehearse for the best costume, role and mask fitting into proper situations in line with the norms of a specific society and values of a specific culture.

Thus, in the back stage the preparations for the front stage performance are conducted, actors can be equipped with social and cultural input for the performances in the front stage. This process is a sort of an assembly line of general mainstream values, norms and traditions. Therefore, it would be appropriate to give an overview of the sexual construction of the masculinity and femininity in Turkish culture, and its reflection on face concern and the language created in the back stage in order to comprehend the attitudes of Turkish women toward sexuality and their interactional style on this issue in the front stage. With this purpose, in this section, the socio-cultural factors influencing Turkish interactional style will be given with the framework of back stage arena. In the first part, the focus will be on the status of women in Turkish society to create a link between gendered social norms and discourse. In the second part, where the emphasis is on cultural orientation, the value placed on familial ties, relatedness and conformity will be discussed. The
third part of back stage input will be on impact on cultural factors and gender norms on language use and structure. The influence of backstage on discourse organization, linguistic choices, self-presentation strategies and interactional style will be outlined in the front stage section.

1.2.1.1 The Concept of Self

Cultural orientation plays a substantial role in cognition of self, relations with others and production of utterances. There is general agreement that personality and views of the self are influenced by both nature and nurture, whereby an important aspect of nurture is culture. Individualism and collectivism have been conceptualized as two powerful cultural models that represent broad differences among nations (Hofstede, 1980, 1991 and 2001; Kim, Triandis, Kağtçibaşı, Choi, and Yoon, 1994; Singelis, 1994; Triandis, 1994, 1995).

Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) make a distinction between collectivism, where group goals surpass individuals’ goals, and individualism, where emphasis is given to individual goals. According to Triandis (1995:2) individualism can be defined as a “social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives”. In contrast, collectivism can be defined as a “social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as a part of one or more collectives”. Accordingly, people in individualistic cultures describe themselves in terms of traits or occupational terms since they view themselves as distinct, autonomous, and self-reliant, whereas people in collective cultures tend to describe themselves in the context of relationships and interdependent terms.

Individualism places strong emphasis on consciousness, autonomy and emotional independence. Individuals give priority on personal goals over group goals. On the contrary, collectivism emphasizes “we” consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, duties and obligations, close and stable relationships. Personal needs, rights and contracts are the main guides of social behavior in individualist cultures, whereas norms, obligations, duties tend to direct personal behavior in collectivist cultures. As Scollon and Scollon (1995:147) put it in their analysis of ingroup-outgroup relationships: “in a collectivist society, many relationships are established from one’s birth into a particular family in particular segment of society in a particular place”. In addition, independent and interdependent self-construals have been emphasized as important factors in defining individual-level differences in cultural orientations (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Different concepts such as idiocentrism and allocentrism (Triandis, 1995), and private and collective self (Greenwald and Prafkanis), individual loyalties and group loyalties (Kağtçibaşi, 1987) have also been defined in the discussion of country level individualism and collectivism.

Several studies draw attention to the fact that Turkish culture puts emphasis upon on relatedness and group consciousness. Many sayings and proverbs illustrate how collectivist values are evaluated and how conformity, solidarity and commonality are underlined as in the following examples: *Nerde birlik orda dirlik* (Where there is unity there is harmony), *Herkesin uyduğu imama sen de uy* (Follow the priest everyone follow), *Güne göre kürk giymek gerek* (One has to wear the
fur appropriate to the day). In all these sayings, the emphasis is on attending to others, fitting in, and harmonious interdependence. This argument has gained strong empirical support at different dimensions of cross-cultural studies. In a cross-cultural study on sexual harassment, Sigal et al. (2005) compare attitudes toward a sexual harassment scenario across nine countries ranging from individualistic (like USA, Canada, Germany and The Netherlands) to collectivistic (like Ecuador, Pakistan Philippines, Taiwan and Turkey). In contrast to participants from collectivist countries including Turkey, participants from individualist countries responded more negatively to academic sexual harassment than those from collectivist countries, which is consistent with the concept of individualism where individual concerns are put above the group well-being and there is more support for the rights of the individuals.

Deniz Zeyrek (2003) makes an ethnographic analysis of Turkish culture and examines the influence of social factors like power, distance and gender on linguistic practice in Turkish, by highlighting the importance of relatedness, group-consciousness and collectivism in Turkish culture. According to Zeyrek (2003:44) “relatedness and group consciousness are central aspect of Turkish culture. Social networks provide support to individuals and in return thrive on their loyalty”. The concept of relatedness refers to closely-knit social and familial network in Turkish culture. Similarly, Kağıtçıbaşı (1990a, 1990b, 1996) in her cross-cultural study contributing on the value of children for parents in the Turkish family indicates the concepts of “family interdependence” and “family culture of relatedness” for the Turkish family of modern times. She also underlines the concept of “related autonomy” which refers to being autonomous, having separate self-boundaries and functioning, and at the same time being related to family, friends and groups. Accordingly, the construct of autonomous-related self emerges within a model of family change reflecting a global pattern of urbanization and socioeconomic development in the “majority world” with collectivistic cultures of relatedness (see Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005).

In a similar vein, several studies in cross-cultural psychology have displayed that cultural orientation of an individual and a society is not fixed and changeable due to immigration, travel, overseas study or work (Heine, Lehman, Markus and Kitayama, 1999 among others). Yamaguchi (1994) stated that some of the collectivistic cultures are now more individualistic than before as a result of Western influences in various fields of the social life, especially in the reformation of the educational system. In contrast to this opinion emphasizing that cultures will move in the direction from collectivism to individualism, Kağıtçıbaşı (1990, 1996, 2005) points out a model of family for the changing societies like Turkey and claims that the change may not be in the direction of attributes in the expense of collectivist tendencies. Changing cultures may move towards individualism while they keep their relatedness and collectivist tendencies at the same time.

The deep concern for the familial ties of Turkish people can be understood from the results of a cross cultural study conducted by Üsküllü, Hynie and Lalonde (2004) to explore the cross-cultural differences in interpersonal closeness to different people (i.e., family members, romantic partner, friends) among Turkish and Canadian sample of university students. Much higher interdependent self-construals were observed among Turkish participants as they underlined the
importance of connectedness, social context and relationships. Studies on parent-child relations shed further light on control, autonomy and relatedness issues in Turkish culture. A study with Turkish minority families in Germany and in the Netherlands (Phalet and Schonpflug, 2001) reveals that parental autonomy goals for adolescents do not imply separateness, and that achievement values are associated with parental values. Similarly, Phalet and Claeys (1993) mentions that while for Belgian youth future achievement has only an individual meaning, for Turkish youth it has the additional meaning of the family in sharing the pride.

Zeyrek (2003) also reports that cordiality and conformity are quite pervasive and evident in Turkish culture. Cordiality and conformity with others are observable as an interactional style in every part of the life especially in hosting the guests and in helping strangers. For instance, Johnson et al. (2000) explore relationships between the cultural orientation of individualism and collectivism and respondents’ self-reported likelihood of participation in surveys at three metropolitan universities in USA, Germany and Turkey. Findings are reported to be consistent with the expectations that people with individual orientations are less likely and people with collectivist orientations are more likely to be willing to comply with survey request. Least resistance was found in the Turkish sample for each measure. This result also suggests that collectivism is associated with conformity and people from collectivist cultures are more likely to exhibit conforming behavior.

Although recent studies have pointed out the co-existence of control, autonomy and relatedness in the modern Turkish family, the traditional families my respondents come from are characterized by interdependence in both material and emotional realms. Interdependent self, which is seen in urban low-socio-economic status contexts (see Kaşgörbaşi, 1981, 1990a, 1990b) corresponds with Turkish women’s views of self. Rather than being psychologically and economically autonomous individuals, they are given a role, a status only through their interaction with the larger group. As a result of the socialization process, women are more likely to have interdependent self-construals that focus on the self as contextualized and embedded in relationships with others. In other words, their sense of self and value drawn from their position in relation to others and their predetermined role within the group and wider society as a whole are reflected through their interaction patterns and linguistic choices.

1.2.1.2 Women in Turkish society: Linking Gendered Social Norms with Discourse

The representation of Turkish women in different studies has oscillated between portraying them as an exploited mass oppressed by harsh patriarchal rules of Turkish society and drawing an image of liberated Turkish women having the same rights as men by the modernization reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The status of Turkish women is not “better” or “worse” than those of women in Western cultures, but it is simply different. Although women seem to be subservient to men, Turkey had a female supreme court justice long before many Western countries did, and Turkey had a female prime minister, something many of the Western countries, for all their success in women’s liberation, haven’t had yet. On the law books,
women have been equal to men for more than three quarters of a century in Turkey through the introduction of Turkish Civil Code (1926), where polygamy was banned, and women were granted equal rights in terms of divorce, child custody and inheritance. However, practice has not always matched the law. Women especially in rural areas usually fulfill more traditional roles due to the strong effects of traditions and Islam, and this causes women's equality to be a difficult goal to attain. Due to the rapid urbanization and demand of Western world, people migrate to either big cities or Western European countries within the last fifty years. However, a change in the living places does not change the experience of being a woman. “Apart from traditional clothes, regional dialects and food, people put their traditions in their luggage, along with their pillows and sheets as they migrate from rural areas to metropolitan areas” said Faraç (1998:184) in his book on honor crimes in Turkey. Faraç also mentions that customs and traditions are effective not only within the borders of Turkey, but also among the immigrant Turkish communities living in Europe. Hence, people cannot break their ties with their society, customs, and traditions.

Turkish society can be considered to have clear-cut gender role differences, supported by highly patriarchal marriage and family institutions (Kandiyoti, 1995). Males, as the dominant sex, are accepted as the ruler of the family to whom wife and children must ultimately respond. The wife's role is to take care of her family members and obey the ruling of the husband to protect the family structure. In short, Turkish people still generally value patriarchy (Kağtçıbaşı, 1981; Kandiyoti, 1995). According to Akpınar (1998) gender norms in the Turkish cultural context consider marriage in the private sphere as a lifelong contract and prohibit public intervention into the private sphere, and this helps to strengthen men’s power and women’s subordination in marriage.

Religion is often misused in the form of an instrument to control women’s sexuality and to legitimize the violation of women’s rights. Different studies confirm that in the pre-Islamic period Turkish women had great freedom and did not sit quietly in their tents all the time. Rather, they were together with their men, "shoulder to shoulder," hunting or fighting. Acceptance of Islam, however, brought new codes where “males and females are construed as opposites, men as rational and capable of self-control, women as emotional and lacking of self-control” (İlkkaracan, 2001:1).

In Turkish culture, control of women’s sexuality is conducted both by externally imposed restraints and by constituting gender according to cultural code of honor and shame, because a woman could bring shame not only on her family, but also on a network of people who feel connected to her. Delaney (1987) argues that “women’s shame” relates to the theory of procreation in which she does not have the seeds of honor within her. That is, she lacks the power to create and project herself, she lacks a core of identity and autonomy. Thus, men must assure and protect the boundaries of their women. A good example of the “protective” legal system and the cultural emphasis on women’s chastity is the virginity exams upon the women suspected of illegal prostitution and/or charged with “immodest behavior”; political detainees; girls in state-run dormitories, orphanages and hospitals; and rarely girls in high schools (Parla, 2001). Honor crimes have also become part of a national debate over women’s rights. Perpetrators of such crimes
are legally entitled to shorter prison terms than those who commit similar crimes for different reasons. In honor trials, sentences for rape are eased if the victim is not a virgin. Thus, not only Turkish society but also the Turkish State plays a strong role in extending the control over the protection of honor and the risk of shame.

In addition to virginity control, each year tens of women or young girls are murdered by their families in the name of protecting family honor. Honor killings are committed for various reasons ranging from marital infidelity—it no evidence is required, the husband’s suspicion suffices—pre-marital sex, flirting to running away from home. Since the murders are frequently not reported and the perpetrators receive light sentences, the concept of family honor is somehow encouraged through the legal system. Through these practices, representations of the shame and protection of honor for Turkish women are strongly embedded within the family web. Social social control coordinated through the gaze of the wider community, and double standards which govern gender roles through the state practices such as virginity controls. All these factors lead Turkish women to experience a kind of “multiple consciousness” in their sexuality because they cannot experience their sexuality autonomously as a natural part of their gender identity, but on the account of their family, wider social network and the whole community they live in.

Feminity in Turkish culture is seen as inherent, an innate attribute of the girls which must be experienced secretly and in privacy. Masculinity, however, is taken as something that boys lack and must acquire as they grow up. Ritual practices such as circumcision and completing military service ensure that young boys and young men acquire masculinity and are eligible for marriage. In contrast, no ritual is performed for girls for experiencing menstruation, for example, because feminity and the female body should be hidden, preserved in privacy, and in no way should be a matter of talk.

In “Masculine Domination”, Bourdieu (2001:53) brings our attention to the honor/shame complex and gender polarity in the protection of honor:

Like honor—or shame, its reverse side, which we know, in contrast to guilt, is felt before others—manliness must be validated by other men, in its reality as actual or potential violence and certified by recognition of membership of the group of ‘real men’.

Put differently, being in line with Goffman’s notion of public face, Bourdieu describes manliness as an externally evaluated and approved active and reproductive capacity. Accordingly, the construction of “habitus” implies that men as the powerful agents have the right to set up the rules of the games in social arenas where women can be hardly seen. Hence, asymmetrical power between males and females and the definition of honor in relation to women’s body and behavior in Turkish society give only symbolic roles to women as carriers and bearers of the group, whilst men are seen to be determinant of the cultural gender norms and the roles.
1.2.1.3 Turkish Women in an Immigrant Setting

In the 1960’s unqualified, low-wage laborers came to the Netherlands to fill the gaps in the lower segments of the Dutch labor market. Beginning in the late 70’s, many of these immigrant workers brought their families to the Netherlands. Numbering 299,000, Turkish immigrants now constitute the second largest immigrant group in the Netherlands, approximately one-quarter of the country’s total immigrant population (De Valk et al. 2001). Turkish immigrants were expected to stay in the Netherlands temporarily, but it became clear that there was a permanency to their residence. Although labor migration has considerably decreased since the 1980’s, a large number of the people from the second generation fetch their spouse from Turkey.

High unemployment, poor education, low income, and inability to speak Dutch often leave Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands culturally separated from the host population. Turkish immigrants are geographically concentrated in certain districts of big cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, and in smaller cities in industrial areas, e.g. Arnhem, Enschede and Groningen. In these places, Turkish communities live in the same neighborhoods where Turkish food shops, teahouses, cultural clubs, mosques and buurt huizen (community centres) are located. This physically and socially segregated setting maximizes acculturation stress and reduces integration into the host society. Moreover, a shifting image of the “Turks” has been determined by the Dutch societal experiences with the Turkish community. The discursive shifts about Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, from guest workers to foreigners, to ethnicized strangers and religious outsiders have constituted women and men differently. The focus of this thesis will be upon two types of woman: employed immigrant women who have access to waged work in host societies, and unemployed immigrant women whose activities are restricted to the household without having a work experience outside the house. The major consequences of the migration process on women concern women’s image, family structure and role patterns in the family.

Turkish immigrant women have increasingly been treated as typical Muslim women by Dutch authorities. This stereotype combines gender (the image of oppressed women), tradition (the socialization in underdeveloped rural areas) and cultural background (Islam’s backwardness) (see Şenocak and Adelson 2000). Discourses invent an Islamized woman’s body around the notions of being non-civilized, old fashioned, inferior and undesirable. Consequently, Turkish women are prejudicially perceived and presented as silent victims who are unable to adapt to modern Western lifestyle.

On the other hand, Turkish immigrant communities where Islam becomes a dominant cultural element and an identity issue more than it is in Turkey, assign certain roles to women while constructing themselves as different communities. As the first generation consists of traditional, less-educated and religious people, the whole of the culture is permeated by religious, ethical and normative considerations, each institution or pattern of behavior is measured against religious and moral standards. In such a normative context, norms are not only regulative, but also constitutive within the inner mechanism of the immigrant community. Baker et al. (1999) state that women’s increased autonomy and new status in a more liberal
setting conflict with ongoing social conduct and threaten traditional male privileges both in public and private context. Akpınar (2003) in her article, where she researches violence against women in the migration context, insightfully argues that the function of women as carriers and bearers of group identity becomes important in immigrant settings where ethnic identity becomes an issue to consider. A woman who attempts to violate boundaries not only put her family name under risk, but also the whole Turkish community she represents.

Abadan-Unat (1977) points out that employment of immigrant women leads to a noticeable decrease of extended families and a sharp rise of nuclear family role structures. Employment of women and a shift from traditional family patterns affect primarily the division of tasks concerning bread-winning, establishments of joint savings and bank accounts. However, as mentioned by Kadioğlu (1994, 1997), working outside the house does not change their status within the family regarding responsibility in housework, cooking, cleaning and caring for children, and within the society concerning their potential as a source of defilement violating certain set of group rules, values, and loyalties. Hence, women suffer the double burden of work both in the public domain and in the household. Although they are given the chance of having more individualistic, independent, risk-taking behavior patterns compared to non-immigrant society, this opportunity is challenged by the native culture. Then, they are only financially better off than their non-immigrant counterparts. Abadan-Unat (1977:55) concludes this situation as follows: “migration as a component of modernization is exercising a double function: promoting emancipation of women as well as creating a false climate of liberation, which actually does not surpass increased purchasing power, thus resulting only in pseudo-emancipation.

1.2.1.4 Reflection of Gender Construction in Turkish Language

Feminist researchers (Lakoff, 1975; Spender, 1990) have identified areas of language structure and use that are gender-biased constructions and/or use of paired pronoun construction, where readers often explain generic masculines as male-biased or referring exclusively to males. They interpret such usage as affirmation and reinforcement of discrimination against women or patriarchal subordination of women to men. Sexist language theory accompanies the widely held conviction that gender-neutral language is absolutely fundamental to the social and political progress of woman issue. Turkish has no grammatical gender and embodies a lot of language structures containing female elements, but the subservient and submissive position of Turkish women is displayed through sayings and proverbs. In other words, grammatical structure does not allow a discrimination against females, but suppression of women is exhibited in the social dimension of language.

The pronominal system in Turkish makes no distinction between the sex of the addressee and addresser. It has only one first person singular pronoun o which requires interpretation of hearer/reader. Braun (1997) argues that Turkish has a "covert gender system" in her in-depth analysis of communication of gender in Turkish. She shows that grammatical neutrality as is the case in Turkish does not necessarily correspond to gender neutrality in discourse. Furthermore, Braun's data reveal the fact that even grammatically neutral forms can be gender biased. A
general rule to be drawn from her data is that male gender usually remains unmarked regardless of context but female gender tends to be overtly expressed as in the case of bayan polis (lit.) woman police. This fact makes females appear as the "deviant gender" in social practices in terms of many occupations and social roles. Wardaugh (1997) makes a comparison between English that marks for gender in its pronominal system and Chinese, Japanese, Persian and Turkish that do not. He confronts the idea that males using these languages are less sexist than males who speak English. In other words, avoiding sexist terms and constructions or speaking with a language having no gender form is no guarantee that what you say will be free of gender bias.

In Turkish, femaleness tends to be more marked than maleness by emphasizing the motherhood and reproductive nature of women through word formation underlining fertility such as toprak ana (lit.) mother soil, tabiat ana (lit.) mother nature, through words emphasizing the importance of the referent such as anayol (i.e.) main road, (lit.) mother road, anavatan (i.e.) native land (lit.) mother land, anapara (i.e.) capital (lit.) mother money. However, many sayings and proverbs illustrate how women are degraded and discriminated and demonstrate how Turkish culture reflects a sexist society. I have shown (Kansu-Yetkiner, forthcoming) that proverbs underline not only the deep relation between society, culture and language, but also how oral linguistic practices and daily discourse of a language could be divested of sexual (im)positionings. Women in traditional Turkish culture are taught to be tolerant and self-sacrificed. They should be confined to domestic spheres and should be self-sacrificing to save their marriage even if they do not have any fault. Yuvayı dişi kuş yapar (Female bird builds the nest) and Kadını yer i kocasının yanında (A woman should take her husband’s side) are common sayings that remind women’s role and status within the family. Men are entitled to have absolute authority within the domestic sphere. Gender norms in the Turkish cultural context consider marriage as a form of a life-long contract within a private sphere, which cannot be intervened by outsiders. This fact strengthens men's authority and women’s subordination within the domestic sphere. The saying Karının karnından sopya sırtından sopya ekşik etmeyeceksin (You will not spare the litter from the woman’s womb nor the cane from her back) expresses the gender norm that a woman, whose task is to give birth to children, should be beaten and has to be kept under control. Other sayings emphasize women’s vulnerability, their incapacity of protecting themselves against dangers, and limited mental capacity as compared to men. Kızı kendi haline bıraksan ya davulcuya ya zurnacıya gider (If you leave a girl unprotected, she will escape either to a drummer or to a flutist), or Saç uzun aklı kısa (Long haired, short witted) are commonly used sayings that illustrate how women’s gender role and status are determined by externally imposed restraints.

In addition, traditional social ideology in Turkish culture provides another negative picture of women. Femaleness denotes negative and inferior characteristics in terms of social and interpersonal context. Therefore, it is usually used as a negative personality trait and a matter of humiliation for men. Denoting a man as kari gibi (i.e.) like a woman, or describing speaking manner as kari gibi konuyun (i.e.) speaking/gossiping too much like a woman, are the common examples of this situation. Moreover, since being a female has negative connotations, a man’s
tendency to listen to his wife’s opinions or taking her approval before doing something are types of behavior conflicting with masculinity mode in Turkish society. For this reason *karı köylü* (i.e.) listening to wife’s words, being closer to her family rather than his own *karı ağzı olmak* (i.e.) speaking with wife’s words are common expressions for men who respect their wives’ opinions. In contrast, masculinity is upgraded as an appreciated mode of behavior and articulated as a compliment both for women and men such as *erkek gibi kadın* (i.e.) a woman like a man; brave, honorable etc. or *adam gibi adam* (i.e.) a man like a man/ a real man.

Women, as the muted group in a patriarchal society, are kept in lowly position, since language and its meanings are controlled by men. Proverbs, in this respect, function as one of the cultural value enhancers sustaining patriarchy as a social system. Apart form this, encoding of a negative image of womanhood as an expression of the wisdom of the society has another negative effect: negativism on women becomes a socio-cultural norm and perpetuates women’s position as proverbs are repeated again and again in daily discourse (see Kansu-Yetkiner forthcoming a). Changing linguistic practices on the morphological level (that is, the usage of generic terminology) would not automatically mean that women are liberated from all modes of patriarchal structure. Avoiding a blanket approach which treats different examples of linguistic sexism manifested at different language level in the same way, Cameron (1998:14) states that “there is slippery heterogeneity about so-called ‘sexist language’: it is not just a case of certain words being offensive, but a part of a language’s core, through to stylistic conventions in specific ‘fields’ of discourse, which are much less general, more conscious, and more context-bound”. Therefore, rather than demonstrating a link between the use of certain language items and sexist attitudes, the nature of sexism and the linguistic support given in different dimensions of discourse must be more under scrutiny.

In the following section, I will shift from the back stage where individuals go under the process of socialization and plan their public presentation to the front stage where they present and perform their constructed selves.

**1.2.2 Front stage**

The front stage is an arena allowing individuals for establishing proper “setting”, “appearance” and “manner” for the social role assumed by the actor. It is the platform for the theatrical performance to describe the “fronts” that people select to perform. Goffman (1959) uses the term “front region” to refer to the place where the performance is given. He considers the performance of an individual as an effort to give impression that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards. He categorizes these standards into two groups, which display interpersonal and personal characteristics respectively. While the former grouping has to do with the way in which performer treats the audience, namely politeness, the latter group of standards has to do with moral requirements and instrumental requirements which are the consequences of “social establishment” (Goffman 1959:111). The process of establishing social identity is, then closely associated with the concept of “front”, which is “that part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for
those who observe the performance” (1959:32). The front functions as a vehicle of standardization through which actors are obliged to fulfill the duties of cultural gender roles and/or social norms with an appropriate timing in a consisted manner. This process, what Goffman calls, “dramatic realization” is structured by the art of impression management which consists of “many minor inadvertent acts happen to be well designed to convey impressions in appropriate at the time” (1959:203). During a performance, information about the actors is given off through a variety of communicative sources. In this study we will focus on cautious self-description and indirect interactional style.

The following chapters will be in service of the analysis of front stage performances. The contents of the subsequent chapters are detailed below.

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis comprises 8 chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the aim and frame of the study by providing a broad description of the socio-cultural situation of Turkish women. It has been underlined that in collectivist cultures or in contexts where a sense of relatedness is perceived and/or imposed, the participants act according to culturally and situationally determined rights and obligations. Chapter 2 will review scholarly literature of self-presentation and politeness theory. Subsequently, the focus will be shifted to facework in Turkish culture. In Chapter 3, I will outline the methodology of the study and give the details on participants. Chapter 4 conceptualizes humor within the framework self-presentation theory and opens a wide window self-presentation in terms of humor use in the form of assertive, defensive, protective and offensive self-presentation strategies. Self-presentation strategies will be globally discussed in terms of humor usage. Chapter 5 first provides an elaborate analysis of evasive communication in corpus-based approach following the traces of defensive and protective self-presentation styles. Subsequently, depersonalization through pronominal shift will be under focus. Different pronominal shifts employed by Turkish women will be designated with respect to topic sensitivity and the hypothesis that topic sensitivity is the driving force behind the pronominal shifts will be supported by quantitative analysis. Chapter 6 will indicate the interactional implications of euphemistic indirectness and vagueness by placing special emphasis on protective self-presentation providing an empirical support in the analysis of euphemistic reduplications. Chapter 7 is in search of the linguistic reflections of assertive self-presentation in the use of two sincerity markers vallahi and gerçekten. Different cultural orientations of self (collectivism vs. individualism) are the main implications derived from distributional analysis of these markers with respect to topic sensitivity and group differences. The final chapter, Chapter 8 will indicate the socio-psychological, cultural and linguistic implications of Turkish women’s talk on socially stigmatized taboo topics. The conclusions underline that gender and cultural roles affect the organization and content of discourse and that the reflections of self and choices in interactional style are results of intersubjective influences of cultural meanings, normative practices and personal interpretations. Suggestions for further research will also be provided.