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Service Learning at National Taipei College of Business, 2012-2013: New Perspectives on Community, Peer-based Education

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Service Learning at National Taipei College of Business, 2012-2013: New Perspectives on Community, Peer-Based Education

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Service learning (also known as peer learning) has received increased attention in tertiary education. By linking learning with authentic volunteer work experience, service learning bridges the gap between theoretical study and practical reality. This practice can increase students' professional knowledge, educational development, self-esteem, and awareness of social responsibility. Service learning became a mandatory requirement for all students at National Taipei College of Business (NTCB; now National Taipei University of Business) in 2011, and this is the focus of this study, extending into the 2012 school year. This course-based program allows undergraduate language majors to put their language skills into practice by teaching peers, and also through other volunteer work. This program has greatly benefitted undergraduate students at the school. This study will examine course data, student reports, and interviews with student teachers. The researchers have documented the implementation of the peer-mentor program at NTCB, and the learning gains experienced among students and the professors who assisted in these processes.

*Keywords:* service learning, peer learning, community learning, collaborative learning, peer teaching, learner-centered approach

**Introduction**

According to Cathryn Berger Kaye (2007), “service-learning connects classroom studies with the natural caring and concern young people have for their world. Service-learning allows young people to contribute to solving problems by helping others in their school community, their neighborhood, or around the world” (p. 1). It is exactly these aims of teaching, learning, and community that the authors of this study kept in mind during the implementation of the Service Learning Program at National Taipei College of Business (NTCB) in 2012 and 2013. In this program, students contacted other students from various departments, organized one-on-one tutoring and larger classes, and taught English and other subjects (as noted, students also worked by simply assisting in various departments as well). The authors found through this interaction with their peers and instructors, students acquired substantial knowledge and skills, and this generated personal, academic and even professional growth.

Service learning programs have recently received considerable attention in tertiary education in schools.
around the world, as well as in elementary and secondary education, with substantial research currently published. Numerous studies have revealed the successes of peer learning, and the authors will examine these works throughout this paper. Benefits include the acquisition of professional knowledge, promotion of self-improvement and self-esteem, improved educational performance, and increased awareness of social responsibility (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Guo, 2013). Anderson (1998) notes that embedding service learning into education calls for actively engaged students to construct their own learning growth, and cultivates them to be more involved as citizens in society.

NTCB established a Service Learning Office in 2010, with responsibilities that included the promotion of service learning and the management of related courses and projects at the institution. In 2011, the school mandated that all students at the institution fulfill a Service Learning course requirement before graduation. In order to fulfill that requirement, the Department of Applied Foreign Languages (AFL) designed a peer-tutoring Service Learning Project. This course-based Service Learning Project allowed undergraduate language majors (most of them primarily focused on English) to put their language skills into practice, by teaching undergraduate students in other majors at the institution (many of whom also consider English important in their education). In order to document the implementation of the Service Learning Program, and the learning gains experienced by students, this research will refer to course data, students’ own written reports, student interviews, and a final formal report given to classes on the last day of the semester in 2012 and 2013 (in December 2012 the chair of the AFL, Michelle Guo, attended this report given by students, in Professor David Pendery’s Advanced Writing Course).

Peer teaching and learning can be of particular use in Taiwan, and the authors hope this paper fills a need within local educational culture. Many Taiwanese college students focus on English language learning, and students are required to take at least one year of English courses. Students receive English instruction with varying course length and teaching methods prior to admission to college, and inevitably they are of varying proficiency levels. In spite of this, they are likely to be grouped in the same class during their English classes in college. To remedy this and better enable students of lower skill levels, universities can encourage higher-performing English majors to conduct peer teaching. Students with higher proficiency can become models for their fellow students, and effect the various advantages the authors will examine in this paper.

Note here that in Taiwan, and also in other countries, educational institutions have only recently considered peer-assisted learning programs, in part because of shortages of funding and highly demanding workloads (Smith, 2008). There is thus a world of possibility waiting to be explored and capitalized on.

According to Eyler and Giles (1999), students involved in service learning developed a better sense of others as well as themselves, and a better appreciation for others’ problems and needs. The NTCB Service Learning Program was useful in these ways, enabling students to obtain teaching experience (some of them in fact already had teaching experience), encouraging responsible behavior as they constructed classes and acquired teaching materials, engaging students with one another in scholarly activities and, at the highest level, encouraging a given pride in education, teaching, and learning.

In the following, readers will see that not only did students very much enjoy the NTCB Service Learning Program, they learned essential skills, refined important educational values, and found a new pride and commitment in their school. In this paper, the authors will first examine Research Methodologies (including Participants, Procedures, and Data Collection), and from there present a Literature Review of related research, Program Results (including Class Preparation, Course Management, and Skills Development; Teaching
Strategies; and Problems Encountered and Suggestions for Improvement), Theoretical Perspectives, and finally a Conclusion.

**Research Methodology**

**Participants**

This paper’s authors will principally examine the students who participated in the Service Learning project in the fall 2012 semester, although the program extended into 2013. Participants include the students registered in two Advanced Writing courses in the AFL (a total of 50), the two teaching assistants in these courses, the two assistant professors, David Pendery and Andrew Rathmann, and the department chair, Michelle Guo, and associate professor. Two teaching assistants, Charlotte Chang and Cindy Chang also participated. Non-English majors in various departments (a total of seven) were the teaching service receivers. The two teaching assistants assumed the role of liaisons, helping all of the participants during the program. The three professors assisted students as needed, and occasionally viewed courses as they were conducted.

**Procedures**

The NTCB Service Learning project was carried out in three stages. The first stage was planning, the second implementation, and the final stage reflection, which included the concluding presentation about Service Learning given by students. The design of the project was formulated in the planning stage. The chair, and the two professors held meetings to decide upon the length of time, guidelines, and requirements of the service. The AFL chair designed tutors’ sign-up sheets, work logs, and reflection sheets. Planning and preparation took approximately one month. During the implementation stage, instructors guided student teachers in their course design. Student teachers then contacted different departments, arranged students to be taught, and began to host English teaching sessions in the eight-week program. The authors see in these reciprocal processes and relationships a given “constructivist approach to knowledge” in which “knowledge is not simply ‘discovered’ but is socially constructed. As a result, rather than authority (instructor) transmitting information, students actively construct and assimilate knowledge through a reciprocal process” (Bruffee, 1995; Schon, 1995; Whipple, 1987, in Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 117). In short, Service Learning is a more learner-centered approach to education, and leads to a break away from dependence on teachers and a move toward independence and self-assurance (Brown, 2006). As a result, “learning is deeper, more personally relevant, and becomes a part of who the student is, not just something the student has” (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 117). The final reflection stage of the project, was comprised, as has been noted, in individual student reports, the final presentation given by students describing their experience, and in this report by the authors.

**Data Collection**

The qualitative and/or subjective data in this study were collected from student tutors’ work log sheets and reflection reports, as well as interviews with students, reports from the TAs’, and meeting notes. A survey of student responses, which will ostensibly provide more quantitative data for research, is in preparation and will be distributed to students in the coming semesters. Readers will note a preponderance of qualitative/subjective data in this report, but the authors maintain that such data is valid, can provide a nuanced view of this program’s results, and is in general the most authentic data that can be collected in social science research such as this. Such qualitative/subjective data is scientifically legitimate, and is in fact the primary method in much research examining experience, development, thoughts, and feelings among groups.
Literature Review

The following literature review will be necessarily brief, and some items will be reviewed quickly. Naturally, all of the works used as sources in this paper cannot be reviewed, but the authors will endeavor to give an overview, and take a deeper look at a few specific works.

Sánez, L., Fuchs, and D. Fuchs (2005) adopted peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS) with 132 English language students from grade two to grade six in their study. Their results indicate that PALS methods significantly improved reading comprehension, reading fluency, and reading behaviors, compared with the results achieved by a control group. Furthermore, Bicais and Correia (2008) pointed out that young English students in peer learning contexts were more likely to ask for clarification and information about task content, and this aided them in their writing. Their interaction with peers helped them to produce better-written work and to advance their writing skills.

At the college level, Rodríguez-Sabater (2005) investigated the effect of peer teaching on learning Spanish as a foreign language. A very high percentage of the 183 students involved in this study reported improvement in pronunciation, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar, and Rodríguez-Sabater also notes that practice and review were benefits in the peer teaching experience.

In a study of peer partnership in an online learning environment, Cole and Watson (2013) noted the positive impact of peer collaboration in online course discussion and feedback. Online forums allow for "constructive critiquing… and… improved teaching and learning" (p. 117) but, the “role of the online educator is… demanding” (p. 118) and these authors found that in online learning situations, students are more isolated, which creates greater needs for face-to-face interaction and support from peers. Similarly, while online help from peers can be constructive, Higgins (2004) found measurable benefits from face-to-face peer tutoring. Higgins’s study examined the course retention rate, of students enrolled in a nursing class, and found that peer tutoring helped to increase not only the academic performance of students but also student retention. The attrition rate in courses decreased from 12% to 3% during her program. In a later study by Arco-Tirado, Fernandez-Martin, and Fernandez-Balboa (2011), peer tutoring was also found to be effective in student retention.

In Taiwan, Lee (2010) explored the potential impacts on study achievements among 310 vocational college students involved in peer learning, and found learning motivation, teaching quality, and enhanced learning were realized by participants. Lee further pointed out that peer-assisted learning expanded dimensions of learning in decision-making and socialization skills. The authors of the current paper, as teachers in Taiwan, strongly believe that Service Learning can be advantageous here.

A key work to examine is “Learning Communities and Student Engagement” (2004) by Chun-Mei Zhao and George D. Kuh, which has been referred to (Zhao is a Research Scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and Kuh is Chancellor’s Professor at Indiana University, Bloomington). This nation-wide survey in the U.S., covering 80,479 students in 365 four-year colleges and universities, examined a conception of learning communities that extends beyond the ambit of the Service Learning program at NTCB. Zhao and Kuh examined learning communities that extended over various courses in school, which students took simultaneously, and they also included extracurricular activities, joint living arrangements and social networking in their research. These authors also considered more specialized learning communities including underrepresented students and students with disabilities. In spite of these differences, these authors did focus on
what were essential aims in the NTCB program, including student engagement, personal and educational development, and satisfaction with school. Zhao and Kuh also employed a more standardized instrument in their research, the National Survey of Student Engagement, an annual survey of students in the United States that collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about student participation in programs and activities. Ultimately, Zhao and Kuh (2004) came to the conclusion that: “Participating in learning communities is uniformly and positively linked with student academic performance, engagement in educationally fruitful activities… gains associated with college attendance, and overall satisfaction with the college experience” (p. 124).

The authors find that a number of the other studies referred to in this paper are in essence similar to what has been examined thus far. That is, they are generalized studies of Service Learning programs, instructors and students, often employing survey data, program materials, and interviews with students, mostly with similar outcomes, as just indicated above. In this light, a second paper, “Integrating Undergraduate Peer Mentors into Liberal Arts Courses: A Pilot Study” (2008) by Tania Smith (Assistant Professor of Communications Studies at the University of Calgary, Canada) will be examined. In most respects Smith’s work is similar to this study, with an initially small group (26 peer mentors in liberal arts studies, but this was extended to seven courses with 473 students), working with student instructors, who conducted classes, led discussion groups, engaged in extracurricular activities, and coached students. Smith employed survey data collected from students, as well as interviews with student mentors. To sum up, Smith states in her conclusion that “these types of programs are proven to have positive educational results,” and they are “highly beneficial.” These are findings the authors strongly agree with.

With this the authors move on to two extremely well-known authors and works, which will be referred to in theoretical analyses below.

Howard Gardner’s (Harvard University) Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983/2011), posits that humans have several different modes of intellection, understanding, and information processing. The theory is a critique of standard intelligence theory, such as IQ testing, which is considered too uniform, and worse, often biased. Gardner has identified eight intelligences: linguistic, logic-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Gardner is currently considering two additional intelligences, existential and pedagogical (this last which could apply to Service Learning programs). Gardner’s more ranging theory has had its critics, but in general it has been widely accepted among teachers worldwide, who are constructing courses that attempt to address individual student intelligences. Gardner’s linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences, particularly, will be applied to findings below.

Dell Hymes’s (1927-2009) Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach (1974) conceives of sociolinguistics as an essential critical perspective on the entire study of language. The scientific problems within linguistics, Hymes contends, combine with social problems, a fact which compels linguists to search for the wider ethnographic foundations of linguistic practices and identity within communities. In this respect, his linguistic studies are always “concerned with social life” and “social phenomenon” (pp. vii, ix)—just as Service Learning. Most important to this study is Hymes’s “SPEAKING” paradigm, which includes the following elements: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequences, Keys, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genres. This theory will be applied to the findings below.
This shall conclude this literature review. Following is an examination of the results of this Service Learning Program.

Program Results

Overall, the group of AFL majors (most of whom, as noted, focus on English studies) serving as tutors for their classmates in this program felt that this project brought value to their own learning and development. Students at once improved their own language skills, as well as their teaching skills in this program. They also found that they learned much from their classmates—true community engagement. They were also able to develop skills in class preparation and management. Interestingly, as student teachers examined their own personal strengths and weaknesses, they found that before their teaching experiences, they had not thought about what they were good at and what they still needed to improve upon; however, after having the opportunity to teach others, they became more aware of their own abilities and skills.

Following are some of the lessons these students learned, the skills they advanced, and some of the problems they encountered, with suggestions for improvement.

Class Preparation, Course Management, and Skills Development

Students described the processes in which they constructed and organized classes at NTCB as mostly enjoyable, including, before the classes began, when they promoted their classes by using posters at school, Facebook, blogs, etc., during course design and as they obtained materials, and finally when they spoke to groups of students as they prepared to launch their classes. Once classes were organized, the teaching students evaluated their students’ levels, addressed particular problems, and created course designs accordingly. “In the beginning I tried to find useful materials, I went to the library,” student teacher Candy Liao said. She continued, “I asked the students what they wanted, and what they wanted to learn. I asked students if they wanted to improve their English ability, and they said ‘Oh yes.’” In this same vein, another student said in a professional vein, “I tried to figure out their problems, and also found some useful teaching skills. The most important thing is to determine their problems at first, and try to help them improve their skills.” Another student considered the specifics of what was being asked for by students, and considered that, “(1) students think English speaking and listening are difficult; (2) students use the wrong method to memorize vocabulary; (3) students do not know how to find something in common and talk to foreigners.” Another bore down into the specifics of English slang and idioms and inquired about “informal usage of English, such as ‘I have seen enough of the rat race of city life,’ and ‘get off the beaten track.’” Some teaching students even extended their advice into other areas, one “providing advice about school teachers, their teaching styles, characteristics, and how they question and score on examinations.”

In all of the above, readers can see how students developed skills. They realized that they had to listen and learn to communicate their ideas with others, a vital part of this program. Tutors did not work alone, and they expressed enjoyment working with others. Their teammates helped them gather information and materials. They shared ideas and benefited from people who came up with creative teaching concepts and activities. In addition, they learned about their classmates in different majors, a step into community activity and participation. Because they worked in teams, they could not be focused on their own performance, but had to accommodate others and be patient. As a result, most tutors indicated that they improved their communication skills during this program.

Throughout these processes students were continually required to attain higher levels of language
knowledge and skill, including vocabulary, reading and writing skills, idiomatic expressions, and grammar. Because they had to explain the materials in English (perhaps occasionally using Chinese), their translation and communication skills also improved.

**Teaching Strategies**

According to work logs and post-program interviews, student tutors identified many effective teaching strategies. These included the study of grammar or vocabulary, strengthening speaking skills, preparing for tests (TOEIC, TOEFL, GEPT, etc.), studying Western cultures, or engaging in various classroom activities they enjoyed (watching films and TV; jokes; guessing games and bingo games; and singing and other musical activities); reading, writing and correcting papers; English correspondence; regular tests; and easygoing conversation in class, which elicited responses and promoted feedback from the tutees. In this respect, during these courses, student teachers often opted to create a comfortable and interesting atmosphere, because during lunch recess and after school, their classmates were sometimes tired and tense. “Our team aimed to create a relaxed atmosphere in learning English. Because we think in this way they can learn with enjoyment,” wrote Ingrid. With this approach, students and teachers found they enjoyed their own efforts and student participation, with Tina Su, who taught Japanese to her student, reporting, “Everything goes very well. My student is hard-working and full of passion. I’m really glad to teach her.” Tina went on that “It’s really interesting to have this kind of teaching activity.”

**Problems Encountered and Suggestions for Improvement**

Because this Service Learning project was a pioneer program at NTCB, some problems were encountered. Students commented on these shortcomings in their written reports, and also during interviews conducted after the program. Prior to the project, the AFL Department had issued a formal announcement to six other departments and promoted the project to department chairs and administration staff. Students from various departments participated in this project voluntarily as tutees. However, because there were many school projects and extracurricular programs held concurrently, it may have been difficult for the departments and their students to keep track of this Service Learning project as it unfolded. The tutors felt that the department should have done even more promotion, so that they could focus on their teaching tasks. This project originally was designed for 10 weeks. The department had to postpone the program two weeks to allow for more promotion time, a small problem in the process. Within the remaining eight-week time frame, one group claimed no student attendance for three weeks, and students failing to show up for class was an occasional problem (Smith also reported this problem, 2008, p. 55).

Tina Su wrote of certain “troublesome” problems in the program. She said that most importantly, initially arranging classes was difficult. Other students echoed Tina’s concerns, saying that finding students and setting up the classes was often problematic, and that the department did not do enough to help students in this regard. “We didn’t really know where to go.” Tina said. “At the beginning, teachers could not find students. It was slow to start,” Candy Liao also said. Tina Su wrote in no uncertain terms, “Please arrange students for this program, and be sure every department knows we [have this program] around the school,” while Candy Liao said, “If possible the department could help us to find students beforehand, which means the tutors can save more time getting on track quickly and coping with student’s problems efficiently.” This problem even extended into other departments, and Kevin said that “other departments did not know about this program, they were not told. So they asked, ‘Do we have the students?’” Professor Guo also observed
some of these difficulties, and commented that “Scheduling was a problem. The project was difficult to get started, because it involved different departments. When our students approached them, it took a lot longer than expected, and became problematic.” Researcher Tania Smith (2008) encountered problems like these in her work, and wrote that Service Learning required “careful planning and adjustment” during planning and execution (pp. 62, 63, 62).

Students were ultimately found in departments in the school, but this is a key area that needs improvement, and departments must be proactive in aiding students in getting started. And beyond initial scheduling, an organized and clear process is needed—from initial sign-up, to promotion of the program, to final establishment of classes with sufficient numbers of students. Professor Guo plans a more elaborate and well-defined schema in the future, incorporating e-platforms such as the school website and Facebook to promote the project, rather than the traditional methods of paper notices, posters, and flyers. “We needed a platform,” she says, “that people could log into and post their schedules on. If students could log on and see the schedules and see which sessions were open, that would be better.”

As referred to by Tania Smith, some students suggested that the department could provide training to students as they prepared to engage in their teaching activities. This seems a very good idea, and would extend the reach of the program into a deeper preparation and instructional facility, which could benefit students for the longer term, providing them with professional skills they could take into the job market when they reach that point. Smith says that “Designing training for peer mentors is essential to a successful peer mentoring program” (p. 52), and her school even has a Collaborative Learning and Peer Mentoring training course. One student said that, “The department should make [the program] more complete before students become involved, and not just throw students into the work.”

To continue on this tack, other suggestions students made for improvement included “providing more options to do service that are not only teaching.” A few students expressed that they were not genuinely interested in teaching, and thus for them this was not a successful venture. For these students other volunteer activities would be helpful, such as giving campus tours or meeting visitors, translation activities, designing and producing teaching or other school materials, or teaching at other schools, including elementary schools. (Note that in the 2013 Service Learning Program, a number of students did not participate in teaching, and they instead served as assistants in various departments at NTCB. The writers of this paper found that in fact students did not prefer this method, that they would rather teach, and they found their administrative duties much less interesting.)

Other problems teaching students encountered in this program included shyness and hesitance on the part of some students, the above-noted irresponsibility of students not arriving to class, a lack of feedback from students and department personnel, difficulty finding the proper rooms to teach in, certain technical problems such as Internet access, and locating teaching materials.

Serving as tutors to help with English language problems experienced by other students gave the AFL students the opportunity to ask probing questions and conduct further learning. Because of the responsibilities entailed in Service Learning, they became more active in and responsible for their own learning and the learning process of their peers. Moreover, the whole process gave them a sense of achievement and fulfillment. It can be seen that although Service Learning projects like this require a great deal of effort from departments, instructors, and students, the benefits are potentially immense.
Theoretical Perspectives

To place these student experiences in a larger framework, the authors first turn to the pioneering work of Dr. Howard Gardner, who posited the conception of “multiple intelligences” in his *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983/2011). Most readers are probably familiar with Gardner’s work, and he has written that, “as a species we human beings are [best] described as having a set of relatively autonomous intelligences” (*Multiple intelligences*, p. 3). Gardner’s eight intelligences were referred to above. Through the lens of multiple intelligences, Gardner has considered “the ways in which societal activities and domains of knowledge emerge and become periodically reconfigured” (*Multiple intelligences*, p. 10). Analysts are drawn here to consider “societies” of students and their activities, such as seen in this program, and the ways in which their intelligence or “domains of knowledge” are being “reconfigured” through student teaching activities. To refer back to that already discussed, one possibility is that students are seeing new possibilities and an innovative elevation in their own education and learning, by way of programs like Service Learning. Even the name of this program seems to align with Gardner’s thoughts (*Frames of Mind*, 1983/2011), with “service” being a community-oriented social activity (interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences), and “learning” being a domain of intelligence and erudition, resulting, perhaps, in future-oriented and culturally-constructed “spheres of knowledge” (*Multiple intelligences*, p. 10).

The authors can link the classroom activities examined in this paper principally to the verbal-linguistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence patterns. Linguistic intelligence involves sensitivity to spoken and written language. This intelligence involves the ability to effectively use language to express oneself and interact with others, and the capacity to use language in order to achieve goals. These are things the students in this program were consistently called on to do. Students with refined linguistic intelligence are good at reading, vocabulary, writing, telling stories, taking notes, listening, discussing, and debating—all activities that, many students referred to using in their classes. The students in Service Learning were consistently called on to exercise their linguistic intelligence in their communication with others, and in the necessity to teach topics. In terms of practical language usage, Angela stated that students “want to learn more useful words that can help them express themselves,” and that her students also desired to improve their writings skills. Melody wrote that “I give them topics to talk about, I also give them some words related to the topics.” She continued that, “we try to give them opportunities to speak English as much as possible.” The authors have referred to the teaching students’ teamwork, and Ingrid wrote in a linguistic turn that in her team, “I enjoy the times we discuss about that we are going to teach,” while Jennifer added that, “I learned a lot from service learning and I also quite enjoyed my team members.”

Interpersonal intelligence is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people. It allows one to work effectively with others. Educators need a well-developed interpersonal intelligence, and students in this program were called on to exercise just this. The inter-communication these students engaged in led to good relationships in this way, such that, as noted, easygoing chat and conversation in class were primary methods that students employed. Students found that this interaction and conversation led to affable, mutually-reinforcing collaborative behavior, such that Bob wrote, “We learned from each other, getting to know about each other and becoming friends,” and Beth added that, “The activity is good for having the mutual relationship between the tutor and the tutee.” Katherine considered the conceptual contours of her teaching approach, and keeping her students in mind wrote that, “I
have to consider more dimensions in which students may have problems.”

Intrapersonal intelligence entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one’s own feelings, fears, and motivations. Though perhaps a bit broad in its application, students in Service Learning would have been required to interrogate their own motivations and methods as they planned and executed courses, developing an effective “working model” of the self as they sought to interact with other students, and ultimately use that information to regulate their own behavior. Some students considered their own teaching and the impact in had on their own psyche, drilling into the challenges that teaching poses, and the ways that teaching can make teachers reconsider their own intellect and behavior. “I learned to be a good teacher and that I needed patience,” wrote Betty, while Jennifer realized that “teaching wasn’t as simple as I thought.” Candy wrote that the project had “forced me to understand my weaknesses.” In another intrapersonal turn, some students expressed doubt about their own ability to teach the subjects, and how this required them to examine their own aptitude and incentive. “Students asked questions, and sometimes I did not prepare,” said Candy Liao. “I could not answer their questions. It was difficult to give them what they needed; it was a big challenge to teach from the beginning.” Additionally, as noted, many reflected on how they had learned about themselves in this process, a true intrapersonal examination. “I not only helped them, I helped myself,” said Candy Liao, while Nina wrote that, “In this course I found what I am capable of and what I need to improve.”

One student even considered questions that branch across the interpersonal and intrapersonal, investigating thinking patterns and intellection that cut to the core of interactive communication and a given self-interrogation, querying that “Sometimes when you think in a Chinese way, it could be more than one answer; however, it’s only one answer when you translate it in English. How to think more like English?”

A second theoretical perspective is the Dell Hymes’s SPEAKING model. In Dr. Hymes’s *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (1974), he conceived of sociolinguistics as an essential critical perspective on the entire study of language—which may be extending the ambit of the analysis in this paper, but which is nonetheless valuable to keep in mind, as the Service Learning Program is in many respects a deeply interactive, social and as well linguistic exercise. Hymes’s SPEAKING model categorizes communicative praxis and human speech acts. His provision of eight elements in his SPEAKING theory did this. The authors will consider the following data with the elements of this model in mind. These elements include: (1) Setting, (2) Participants, (3) Ends, (4) Act Sequences, (5) Keys, (6) Instrumentalities, (7) Norms, and (8) Genres. In terms of the research in this paper, Setting is the college classroom, with students participating as both teachers and students; Participants are these same people, multi-lingual participants of varying skill levels, mostly studying English, but also engaging in other language and academic studies; Ends are the learning and teaching goals of students and teachers—the aims to improve that have been referred to; Act Sequences are in-class behaviors and classroom processes, forms and order, as defined by the teacher and to some extent students—the cooperative interactive behaviors and classroom design that comprise the core of much of the teaching examined in this paper; Keys are the communicative contextualization cues transacting between students and teachers, which establish the tone, manner, or spirit of communicative praxis in class (those small changes in pronunciation, vocabulary, lexis and tenor that can direct the temperament of conversation and interaction); Instrumentalities are the teaching methods and materials used by teachers; Norms are the various cultural and educational standards adhered to in class (politeness, hard work, teamwork, unselfishness, cooperation); and Genres are the various kinds of speech acts or events that take place in class: storytelling, jokes and games, conversation, Q&A,
presentations, discussion and debate. All of the above suggests and points to fully transactional communicative practices and exercise, as the students in this program engaged in.

Conclusion

The authors hope the above analysis has given a thorough picture of the NTCB Service Learning Program. This project has produced a significant increase in students’ intellectual, professional, and personal growth, and that students were proud that their activities elevated the quality of education at their school, and led toward a genuine social interactivity and newly configured domains of knowledge and experience (as suggested by Howard Gardner, above).

Professor Guo states that in addition to students having “a sense of achievement in this program,” it was also ‘absolutely a benefit for the school, and I think we should do more.” She continued, “I think the value of the program is tremendous. It’s not just a win-win situation, it’s more. It helps with participating students, and also students who receive the instruction. I believe the student instructors benefitted from the program.”

Future programs will be a challenge Guo says, but “there will be other opportunities and projects for students. Everybody involved in this project has learned a thing or two about helping students and the problems students have.” It can be seen from these comments that both teachers and students enjoyed this opportunity, and that they learned from it.

The results of this study show that, in addition to learning from the professors’ lectures and teaching approaches, students were able to learn from their peers through observation, interaction, and team teaching. Student tutors were given the opportunity to create a supportive environment for themselves and for other students, and this community learning activity has yielded rich fruit. Through this project, these students developed a sense of achievement and became valuable assets and/or resources for their school, and even their local, community. In future programs, faculty members can find more ways to help students find connections both inside and outside their classrooms. Simultaneously, they can strengthen collaboration with other faculty and staff for additional Service Learning opportunities.

Note here that there were limitations in this study. First, this project was not a long-term project (although it has extended over two semesters now). Student tutors engaged in only eight weeks of actual service work. As well, the collected data was mainly qualitative and/or subjective; there was relatively little quantitative data—but the authors have commented how such qualitative data is valid. In spite of these small shortcomings, the positive outcomes of service learning on student tutors and the student community as witnessed by the researchers were compelling.

To conclude, at a high level students have learned lessons, first, in idealistic public-spirited efforts—Nandan and Scott (2011) say that Service Learning programs “fall along a continuum from charity to social justice” (p. 26). In this light, the authors’ hope, again optimistically, is that students have seen a view into volunteer service in their communities, the value of teaching others in need, and personal satisfaction and collective contribution. Additionally, they have honed pragmatic, job-oriented skills, which will strengthen their own resources going forward in advantageous ways. In sum, Service Learning communities are “educationally purposeful activities” yielding “high levels of student learning and personal development” (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 115), which may be implemented in Taiwan again in the future, bringing illuminating “points of light” (to borrow from George H. W. Bush) into education here. As a final word, and looking ahead, one student, Claire, said optimistically that, “Through this tutoring experience, I can know what I need to work on
in the future,” while Monica wrote simply that, “I’m very glad to have this opportunity to teach other students English.”

It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to the development of Service Learning programs in Taiwan and abroad.

References


Implicit Learning and Explicit Learning in the Context of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language—By Analyzing the Textbook *Kuaile Hanyu*

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With the rising status of China in the world in the economic, political and cultural aspects, Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) is becoming more and more prevalent across the world. Britain is the country where the Chinese is taught and learnt earlier than other Western countries. Take the students in Confucius Institute of Newcastle University in UK for example, due to the students’ different backgrounds and also different ages and language foundations, whether the Chinese teaching materials can meet their motivations and needs is a problem worth further investigation by Chinese language teachers. Therefore, concerning the learners’ different ages and cognitive ability, this paper aims to analyze the textbook named *Kuaile Hanyu* (Happy Chinese) in terms of its advantages and disadvantages, in hope to evaluate whether it is appropriate to different learners and propose a few suggestions for the Chinese materials in the future. Simultaneously, from perspective of implicit learning and explicit learning, a tentative study is carried out on the influence of implicit and explicit learning in TCFL context.

*Keywords:* Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL), textbook, implicit learning, explicit learning

**Introduction**

In 1825, the British professor and scholar Robert Morrison, to be the first Chinese teacher, taught Chinese in London. And in 1938, University of London set up Chinese course, which made Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) be accepted officially in the UK universities (ZHOU, 2005). So far, Chinese teaching has become a mainstream in the secondary and primary schools of Britain rather than an unnoticed course just in a few universities in the past. Obviously, the demand of Chinese teaching material is becoming increasingly higher and higher year by year. However, some problems emerged in the development of TCFL.

This study is practical in that it will identify the typical problems of the textbooks by comparing the implicit and explicit learning. In the process of further investigation, it is expected that the findings could make some contributions to the improvement of Chinese textbooks in TCFL context, which definitely is of great significance not only for teaching but also for learning.

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The Development of Textbook—Kuaile Hanyu

The aim of Chinese teaching materials is not only to facilitate the learners to acquire the language, but also to benefit them to get to know about the Chinese culture. With a lot of successful concepts and methods in this book, Kuaile Hanyu (English Version) is also applied by many Confucius Institutes in Britain. After soliciting opinions from the experts concerned and with the permission of NOCFL (China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language), the textbooks have been published in the UK by the British Council with the title Chinese for GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) (2002). In 2003, it was named Kuaile Hanyu (International Version). In 2006, it was elected to be the most popular “International Chinese Teaching Materials” out of other numerous teaching materials. In 2009, to meet the learners’ needs in different countries, it has been translated into several languages including English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, and Italian. In 2010, it was honored as “The Excellent International Chinese Teaching Material” in the competition of international Chinese teaching materials, which is prevalently used by the teachers and learners in domestics and abroad. Therefore, this teaching material is worth further investigation in this paper.

The Content and Structure of the Teaching Material

Kuaile Hanyu (English Version) is a series of Chinese teaching materials specially compiled for junior middle school students aged from 11 to 16 whose mother tongue is English. The set consists of a student’s book, a teacher’s book, a workbook, flash cards, and CDs. Kuaile Hanyu is made up of three levels with six books, each of which contains eight units with three texts related to the same topic. At the end of each unit, Character-writing exercises are also incorporated in the student textbooks. Audio CDs accompany each book and there is ample scope for children to gain listening and comprehension practice.

With both a student’s book and teacher’s book at each level, Kuaile Hanyu accords with learner’s psychological conditions and needs of the student from 11 to 16 years old, and with the requirements of foreign language curricula of certain countries. Kuaile Hanyu (Happy Chinese) engages students’ interest straight away through the use of appealing cartoon personalities, colorful cartoons and photographs. The dialogue situations are life-like, relevant, drawn from areas such as family, school, environment, and sports and so on. It is suitable for conversational exercise of primary and secondary school students; with the practical contents designed for versatile usages, it is very popular among teachers and students. The emphasis is on enabling the students to learn Chinese in natural conditions and to arouse their interest and to raise their ability to communicate in Chinese, so as to lay a solid foundation for their studies.

The Introduction of Implicit Learning and Explicit Learning

Since the 1950-1960s of last century, TCFL has drawn great attention in Western countries. From 1950 to 2014, the papers concerning TCFL characters research has reached to 398. Thus, many textbooks have much emphasis on characters teaching. As cognitive psychology pointed out that implicit learning and explicit learning have been applied to TCFL in recent years. This paper is to explore characters teaching in terms of implicit and explicit learning based on the textbook of Kuaile Hanyu. Before exploring the characters exercise, it is appropriate to illustrate what the implicit and explicit learning is respectively.
American cognitive psychologist Reber (1967) has proposed the conception of implicit learning in “Artificial Grammar Implicit Learning”. He also stated that there are two types of learning, that is, implicit and explicit learning. He believed that implicit learning means that learners are unaware of the structure of the knowledge that they learn, however, unconsciously and unknowingly, they acquire the knowledge through comprehensible input. On the contrary, explicit learning is a process of making effort and study strategies to complete tasks.

From the perspective of ages, a baby can acquire his mother tongue without any difficulty while an adult is unable to become a proficient foreign language learner. Thus, it is essential to understand the differences between implicit and explicit learning both from theoretical and practical perspective, which will make Chinese character teaching more effective to combine the two kinds of learning patterns appropriately.

**Research Question**

The contemporary overseas Chinese teaching is chaotic, to be more specific, it is a common phenomenon that the same textbook is used in both universities and high schools, or even in junior or senior schools (H. XU, 2009). Due to different ages, backgrounds, professions, and study habits, it can be seen that the cognitive ability between adults and children is bound to be different. Whether the same textbook can meet the needs and motivations of these different learners? It should be analyzed and investigated further.

**The Significance of Analyzing Exercise in Textbook**

In the process of compiling, the textbooks were tried out in some junior middle schools in UK under the organization of the British Council. *Kuaile Hanyu*, aiming to train Chinese communicative competence in the real-life environment, motivates and stimulates the learners’ interest. As in most Chinese-published material, the emphasis is on direct immersion in language exercises, and there are a large number of exercises for each new part.

The director of the center for British Chinese resources Chen Tongdu in the China National office believes that the current textbooks with the writers’ self-concepts and methods are not able to meet the learners’ different requirements and needs based on their backgrounds, ages, and language levels.

As YANG Hui-yuan (1997) noted that language acquisition is achieved through doing exercise rather than being taught or told. To some extent, passing on the knowledge is just to make the learners to know, on the contrary, practice can achieve the goal of understanding. It is obvious that the exercises attached to each unit seem very effective and efficient for learners’ language acquisition. It is of great significance to analyze the character exercises in an implicit and explicit method concerning the student’s different ages and backgrounds.

**The Analysis of Character Exercise**

**Form**

According to LIU Xun (2000), the exercise of sentence pattern substitute in many teaching materials, generally speaking, is simply to list the new vocabulary, which seems boring and dull. ZHAO Jin-ming (1998) also pointed out that the exercises of Chinese teaching material are tedium with insufficient quantity. From the perspective of the author, excessive exercises will cause students’ tiredness; on the other hand, limited amount of
exercises could have a negative effect on students’ language acquisition. Compared with the practice of sentence pattern substitute in *Kuaile Hanyu*, most of the contents are picture talks or choice-making according to the pictures, which are very interesting and vivid. Practice is no longer the inflexible presentation of the language structure, and the students do not necessarily complete the exercise passively and mechanically but their emotions and interest could be stimulated. Thus, the form of exercise is attractive to both youngsters and adults.

**Tones**

Chinese characters teaching should follow the basic steps such as “recognition” and “stroke”, “write”, “apply” so that the students can gradually master the form, sound, meaning, and usage of Chinese characters. The practice in this textbook is not enough, at the same time, because the emphasis in *Kuaile Hanyu* is on learning characters and pinyin together; the pinyin pronunciation appears above each character in small text (grouped as a compound where appropriate), providing a more friendly approach for children but not proper for the adults. Additionally, the characters which have the same form but different tones are also what the learners’ problem.

**Strokes**

What worries the majority of foreign learners is the writing of Chinese character, especially the strokes. When analyzing the textbook *Kuaile Hanyu*, strokes of the Chinese characters are marked with different colors, which make the learners to be clear about the sequence of the strokes when writing Chinese characters. From this point of view, it is beneficial to the beginners, especially the youngsters, who often make mistakes of writing. However, it is omitted in the third volume (WANG, 2000). Compared with the youngsters in middle school, it is suitable and appropriate for the adult learners who should strengthen the structure of Chinese characters and components. The more challenges there are, the more motivations they will obtain.

**The Analysis of the Quantity of Exercise**

As shown in Figure 1, the quantity of the exercise in the three textbooks has been analyzed. Take the characters practice into example, the numbers in the first textbook are from five to eight. Alternatively, the numbers in the second textbook is seven; however, the numbers in the third shows a tendency of decrease, which is from five to seven. Combining the numbers of the exercises in three textbooks, the distribution and outline is relatively reasonable. As scholars XU Zi-Liang (1999) advocated a saying “sense of the word”, he suggested that it is efficient to expose students to as many characters as possible and to help students experience and perceive the shape of Chinese character by practicing extensively, especially in the initial stage. Therefore, the students could shape and form the sense of the word by expanding the scope of short-term memory.

It can be concluded that the number is decreasing in the third year, which shows that the foundation has been laid in the first two years. Students should focus on their study in the initial process of language learning with sufficient and adequate drills of the exercises.

As it is shown in Figure 2, the quantity of the exercises shows a tendency of decrease. However, it should be admitted that it shows an irregular result, more specifically, the numbers of the first book is 155, the numbers of the second book is 169, and the third book is 134 subsequently. From this perspective, with the increase of autonomous learning, it should be admitted that it is suitable for the learners’ cognitive features.

In terms of the difficulty, it can be concluded that basic grammar practice is emphasized and consolidated,
while the second book prefers the usages of vocabulary and the training of sentence patterns flexibly, and in the third book, both of the difficulty and variety are more challenging. Therefore, with the enhancement of the learner’s autonomous ability and the independent ability, it is in line with the learning characteristics and cognitive features of learners.

![Figure 1. The quantity of the exercise in the three textbooks.](image)

Explicit learning, for example, vocabulary or grammar leaning, is completed by explicit means such as memory and syntax analysis through a conscious way, more specifically, the acquired knowledge is stored in an explicit way and controlled by consciousness while implementing.

**Findings**

Based on what have been analyzed above, it can be concluded that the practical teaching material can play a prominent role in terms of teaching quality. When assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of a textbook, many factors should be taken into account, for example, whether the contents of textbooks should be suitable for the students’ language level, whether it caters for the learners according to their ages, whether it can meet the needs and learning purpose of learners’ based on their different language proficiency, whether it can properly deal with the problems between language and culture. However, most of the Chinese textbooks are teacher-centered rather than the students-centered so that the textbooks cannot get close to foreign learners’ thinking due to lack of foreign culture, language, and expressions.
The results concluded that in the first volume of *Kuaile Hanyu*, the total words are 178, 71% of which are the new HSK (level 1), (level 2) words. The numbers of characters which have the same form but different tones in *Kuaile Hanyu* are 299 characters. Obviously, *Kuaile Hanyu* embodies requirements of the “syllabus” and “levels” of HSK in terms of characters. No matter what textbook the learners will learn, they will gain access to these Chinese characters.

From the perspective of the connection between implicit learning and Chinese character teaching in *Kuaile Hanyu*, based on dynamic composition corpus, there are many mistakes such as joined up, misplacement, mismatch, wrong radicals, which reflect that there exist certain disadvantages in terms of the implicit learning.

Suggestions

The Roles of Teachers

The impact teachers have on learners is significant, especially on the junior students. To be more specific, teachers in the primary stage should change some of the strategic approaches, for example, to strengthen the relationship between a combination of strokes and Chinese characters. When teachers write Chinese on the blackboard and correct homework, they should write the words clearly so as to avoid “joined up”. In this way, students are not only clear about the numbers of the strokes but also form a habit of writing characters more clearly, for instance, the stroke of the word “home” is complicated, especially its radical, so the stokes like this should be paid more attention to.

Strengthening Explicit Teaching

The implicit teaching method implemented in the teaching material is to make the students form a sense of the words unconsciously, thus gradually and eventually acquire these characters. In the process implicit learning, students are able to master the overall structure of these characters, for example, the left and right structure, or the up and down structure. It is a wrong conception that students can get a better grasp of the overall structure. To reduce these errors, we should begin to teach, such as strokes and radical, enable students to focus on the details, especially when there is the same kind of stroke for many times.

Conclusion

The Confucius institutes abroad are hoping to assist Chinese government promoting Chinese learning and dissemination of Chinese culture. A large number of volunteers and professional Chinese teachers have been sent to overseas to carry out Chinese language teaching, simultaneously, numerous teaching materials and documents have been introduced from domestic. When confronted with such a variety of Chinese textbooks, whether they can really serve learners effectively and efficiently and whether they can meet the learners’ needs are worth of exploring and analyzing by our language teachers.

This paper is to analyze the characteristics of teaching material named *Kuaile Hanyu* in the perspective of ages, backgrounds, and cognitive ability of learners. By comparing the similarities and differences between *Kuaile Hanyu* and other Chinese textbooks, the author proposes some suggestions and recommendations.

It also can be concluded that the communication between editors and users is of great necessity in order to investigate the problems emerged in the process of application and then to resolve the problems and adapt the textbooks.
Meanwhile, the textbook editor should focus on learner’s characters including their Chinese levels, their identity, cognitive characteristics, ages, specially the understanding of the local language, culture, and the actual situation of the overseas Chinese learning should also be taken into deep consideration in order to meet the needs of the different levels of Chinese language learners, to achieve high quality of the teaching effect, and to improve the teaching material constantly and appropriately.

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Minimizing Distance Using
Just-in-Time Teaching and Flipped Classroom

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JiTT (Just-in-Time Teaching) and flipped classroom are two innovations in academia where high-tech and no-tech resources are blended to encourage more interaction and creativity among students. These two methods also help minimize the dependency on face-to-face lecture and make the class time more creative and effective. This study is the very first attempt of implementing these strategies in Bangladesh. It explores the prospect of JiTT and flipped classroom at tertiary level in Bangladesh. In the first part of this paper, recent studies on JiTT and flipped classroom are discussed to shed light on their effectiveness and problems. The latter part explains the data and research findings. Before collecting the data, JiTT and flipped classroom were used with 33 students of undergraduate level who were students of “ELT Methodology” course. After the implementation of the methods, a questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data regarding their response to these two methods. The study reveals that JiTT and flipped classroom help cover more topics in a short time while enhancing students’ interaction and participation. They make students come to the class prepared and reflect on their learning. Teachers can understand students need better and provide required feedback. The overall interaction among students and teachers can be improved using JiTT and flipped classroom since everyone is clear about each other’s existing knowledge and learning objectives.

Keywords: just-in-time, technology, teaching strategies, flipped classroom, video lecture

Introduction

The future role of technology in education is a matter of debate among the teachers, administrators, and students. Most of them would agree that technology will change education in the future. However, the argument lies in how it will change education and whether it will bring a positive change or negative change. Novak, Patterson, Garvin, and Christian (1999) came up with a new blend of technology and traditional teaching named “Just-in-Time Teaching” (JiTT) that was appreciated by all interested groups. According to them, JiTT is a teaching and learning strategy based on the interaction between web-based study assignments and active learners’ classroom. Students respond to an online reading/assignment before the class and the instructor reads students’ responses “just in time” to adjust classroom lesson according to their needs. On the other hand, in a flipped classroom, learners listen to the lecture sitting at home and do the assignment in classroom with the help of their teachers and peers (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Several studies (Gavrin, 2006; Ruddick, 2012; Tucker, 2012) have shown that both JiTT and flipped classroom can be used to enhance learners’ active participation and minimize dependency on face-to-face class.

At the beginning of 2014, Bangladesh was going through some political unrest that resulted in strikes and
blockades. Therefore, students missed a number of classes and it became difficult to finish the syllabus within the semester. That situation made the author to think of using JiTT and flipped classroom strategies to complete the syllabus within due time while ensuring students’ learning and active participation. However, the underlying purposes of this study was to explore the benefits and problems of JiTT and flipped classroom at tertiary level in Bangladesh and how these two strategies can be used to lessen dependency on physical presence in a classroom while enhancing learners’ participation.

**JiTT and Its History**

JiTT is an innovative way of increasing interactivity in the classroom and engaging learners in the learning process (Gavrin, 2006). It is a “fusion of high-tech and low-tech elements” (ibid) where WWW (i.e., high-tech element) is used to deliver materials and initiate communication among students and teachers. Low-tech side put emphasis on classroom interaction among them. The underlying method is to involve the students into some warm-up tasks and allow the teachers to make necessary adjustment in their lessons depending on learners’ need.

The term JiTT is a reminiscent of Toyota, a famous automobile company, who used “Just-in-Time” manufacturing process to enhance flexibility and responsiveness of their operation (Monden, 1998). In this process, goods are produced in small quantities to meet the instant market demand and raw materials and parts are purchased in small quantities to be used just in time for production. Thus, each delivery is smaller and contains only the materials that are specifically needed for short-term function, instead of large infrequent deliveries that address the average needs. Using this analogy of automobile production, Gavrin, Watt, Marrs, and Blake (2004) developed a pedagogical system called JiTT. It also emphasizes only on the students’ specific needs and does not waste time repeating the things that they already know.

**How JiTT Works**

In a traditional classroom, a teacher comes to the class with some preplanned activities but while executing the tasks, he/she finds them to be very easy or tough for the students. The teacher often repeats the topics that students already know that result to a boring atmosphere in the classroom. To change the mood of the class completely, JiTT allows both the teachers and students to do some collaborative homework before coming to the class. Rather than starting a lecture from scratch, students participate in some warm-up tasks and discussion through WWW. Usually, the teacher provides some reading materials and online exercises that students need to read and complete before attending the class. The teacher goes through their responses to identify the areas students face problems or grasp easily. Based on the observation, he/she will decide the amount of time to be spent in class on various topics. In this way, they can ensure that they spend enough time on a difficult topic and do not repeat the same thing. Gavrin (2006) mentions that students’ performance in the warm-up tasks helped him understand the “current state” of the students and he worked to improve them to his desired level.

**Flipped Classroom**

The idea of flipped classroom derived from one simple question—what is the best way of utilizing face-to-face time with students? (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Flipped classroom is pedagogical model in which the role of homework and typical lecture is reversed (EDUCAUSE, 2012). It has become popular particularly
for the availability of audio and video materials on any subject in a virtual classroom (Herreid & Schiller, 2013). Unlike traditional classroom, in a flipped classroom model what is normally done in classroom and what is normally done at home are switched. Instead of listening to lectures in class and doing homework at home, students watch video lectures and read relevant materials at home and spend the class hour doing problem solving activities in collaboration with their peers and teachers.

Ruddick’s (2012) research findings show that the students of flipped classroom outperformed the students of traditional classroom in their final exams. She implemented flipped instruction in a chemistry class. Her study further reveals that students of flipped classroom felt less intimidated about chemistry and found the online lectures and PowerPoint slides very useful. Kay and Kletskin (2012) found from their mathematics course that students prefer video podcasts or lectures since they find it easy to follow and helpful to understand any new concepts. Zappe, Leicht, Messner, Litzinger, and Lee (2009) flipped a large undergraduate architecture classroom. Their students reported that flipped classroom is more enjoyable than traditional classroom and they can cover more topics within a short time while ensuring active participation of everyone. Teachers in Fulton’s (2012) study made almost a revolution using flipped classroom. In her study, the math teachers of a high school in Minnesota flipped their math classes to suffice the lack of textbook and they derived the following benefits:

1. Students can work at their own comfort zone. In a lecture-based class, weak students struggle to understand their teachers and sometimes the strong students find repetition of what they already know. But, the lecture is videoed, they “breeze through” it or watch over and over it needed.
2. When students did their math homework in classroom, teachers got better idea of students’ problems and provided effective feedback.
3. Classroom time was used more creatively and effectively and students had access to multiple teachers’ expertise since all the videos were open to all the students.
4. Parents could also have a look into their children’s coursework and performance.
5. Teachers also enhanced their professional development through the process of creating and sharing videos.

Herreid and Schiller (2013) mentioned some pitfalls of flipped classroom. Firstly, students who are new to the method might show resistance since they have to study at home before attending any class. Moreover, if any student comes to the class without preparation, he/she might face problem in doing the activities. Secondly, creating a video might be an extra burden for the teachers. Finding a suitable and good quality video from other source is also very difficult. However, in Tucker’s (2012) study, almost all the teachers agreed that it is not the instructional video but how they are integrated into the overall process that makes the difference. Therefore, preparation before conducting a flipped classroom is very crucial. Bergmann and Sams (2012) proposed to consider the following issues before flipping a class:

1. It is better to collaborate with other colleagues instead of doing it alone. They mentioned a virtual network (flippedclassroom.org) where all the flipped classroom teachers can meet.
2. Since it is a different way of teaching, it is very important to get support from the administrators. Support from the IT department is also necessary, as the method is very much dependent on technology.
3. Before flipping their classes, teachers should give enough time to learn the new software and other technical aspects.
4. Thoughtfulness is the most important thing needed to be a successful flipped classroom teacher. The teachers need to understand their individual context and adapt their flipped model accordingly.
Methodology

The current study is explorative in nature since it is the very first of its kind in Bangladesh. Based on the other pieces of research conducted in different countries, this study attempts to explore the scope and prospect of JiTT and flipped classroom in Bangladeshi setting. A survey was conducted to collect data from the participants and the data are analyzed to find—(1) students’ attitude to JiTT and flipped classroom and (2) pros and cons of these teaching styles.

Participants

Since the study focuses on the tertiary level, 33 undergraduate students of English department were selected for collecting data and all of them were doing the course “ELT Methodology”. The students were quite competent in using technology. Almost every student had internet access from their home and around 70% students (23 out of 33) had smart phones with internet.

Data Collection Procedure

For the purpose of data collection, JiTT and flipped classroom were applied in the classroom for one month to cover four chapters of the syllabus. There were eight classes in one month where four of them were JiTT classroom and the others were flipped classroom.

In case of JiTT, the reading materials and relevant tasks or quizzes were uploaded in Moodle (a learning management system) and students had to go through them before coming to the class. Sometimes, they also participated in online discussion based on their readings. The teacher used to go through their responses before the class and prepared lessons according to that. Later, the students took part in classroom activities.

Lectures for flipped classroom were videoed in the university’s media lab. Relevant PowerPoint slides were also incorporated with the videos. Ideally, videos are uploaded in web but due to connectivity problem, the lectures were not uploaded. The students collected them from media lab and after going through them, participated in in-class tasks.

After one month of implementation, a survey was conducted among the students to know their responses and feedback to these new strategies. It is to be noted here that Moodle was used as a learning management system for this study and students were quite efficient in using Moodle since they also used it for other courses. But, it was the first time that technology was blended with real classroom teaching.

Findings

Results from the current study are presented in two frameworks. The first one sheds light on students’ attitude towards JiTT and flipped classroom and the next one talks about the pros and cons of these strategies and makes some recommendations.

Students’ Attitude to JiTT and Flipped Classroom

Research findings show that 20 students out of 33 thought that JiTT and flipped classroom were helpful for them. Ten students partially agreed with them but they also opined that it would vary depending on the contents. Flipped classroom might not be effective if the contents are difficult to understand. The rest three students were not so optimistic about these teaching styles.

Most of the students (25 out of 33) mentioned the following benefits of JiTT and flipped classroom:

(1) They can cover more topics within a short time. Usually the teacher lectures in one class and in the next class, they have discussion or practical tasks but in these strategies, they can participate actively from the first class.
(2) The new teaching strategies make them to participate in the classroom. In traditional setting, they do not need to come to the class prepared since the teacher is going to explain everything. However, while following JiTT and flipped classroom, they have to attend classes with preparation and that helps them to understand and critically analyze teacher’s lecture and actively participate in the discussion.

(3) JiTT and flipped classroom discourage them to come to the class with a blank head. They come with a minimum preparation to participate in the discussion or task. However, they also consider it as an extra-load.

(4) They feel free to agree or disagree in online discussion (that was a warm-up task in JiTT), which they cannot do in a face-to-face discussion, since they prefer to maintain harmony among their peers. The overall interaction among students and teacher was improved in these methods.

(5) The students were very happy about the fact that they can listen to the recorded lecture whenever they want to. In a lecture-based class, they have to write down everything and if they miss something, they get confused. On the other hand, in a flipped classroom, they are provided with the video lecture and they can listen to it and repeat whenever they need. Six students further said that they can carry the lectures in their mobile phone or tab and listen to it on the way to their university.

The survey ended with an optimistic note that out of 33 students, 29 students (almost 88%) said that they would like to have this type of blend in future in other courses. They found it to be very exclusive and dynamic and it allowed them to work in their comfort zone.

Problems of the Methods
All the students agreed that they did not face any problem to follow teacher’s instruction. Even if there was any confusion, they asked their friends to clarify.

Regarding technical problems, 18 (54.5%) students mentioned that, due to slow internet connection, they faced problem in downloading the materials from Moodle. One student said that it was her first experience with Moodle so it took time for her to cope up with this LMS (Learning Management System).

Ten students mentioned that if the content is new or difficult to them, JiTT and flipped classroom instruction might not be effective. Rather, it will be a “burden” for them to understand the contents on their own and prepare for the classroom participation. It also might be frustrating since it is the “teachers’ job” to make things clear to the students.

Two students mentioned that these methods expect learners to be tech-savvy but in reality that might not be the case. They further stated that for the successful implementation of JiTT and flipped classroom, it is necessary to have 24-hour internet access, which every student does not have.

Recommendations
The study attempts to make some recommendations on how these strategies can be adapted to derive more benefits from them. In the survey, 21 students made the following suggestions to improve the teaching strategies. The rest could not suggest any.

(1) The recorded lectures can be uploaded in Moodle (even though it is time consuming) so that they can access them from home.

(2) The instruction for in-class assignment can be given online so that they can come prepared.

(3) Since all of them are regular Facebook user, Facebook can be incorporated in learning and teaching, like Moodle.

(4) The lectures can be recorded with the help of students. It will motivate them and make them engaged
into the learning process.

(5) The power-point slides need to be more interactive as the virtual class lacks direct interaction among teacher and students.

Conclusion

It was reported by EDUCAUSE (2012) that reflection is crucial to ensure effective learning, which students cannot do in a traditional lecture based classroom because they have to capture the contents instantly. The report further says that devoting the class time in application of the concepts will help the teachers identify students’ errors and provide timely feedback. Considering this research claim and the then political situation of the country, this study was conducted to use JiTT and flipped classroom in Bangladesh and explore their prospects at tertiary level. Therefore, the participants were selected from undergraduate level and a survey was conducted after the successful implementation of the methods. The survey results reveal that JiTT and flipped classroom exerts positive influence in the students. They agreed that these methods help them to be more engaged into the learning process. They get the chance to reflect on what they are learning. Their overall response showed that they find JiTT and flipped classroom to be dynamic, smart and engaging way of teaching. They also expressed their interest to have this combination in future in the other courses. They further made some recommendations to implement the methods more successfully in future. After analyzing all their responses, it can be claimed that students hold a positive attitude towards JiTT and flipped classroom and these strategies can be used to lessen dependency on physical presence or face-to-face interaction while enhancing active participation virtually.

References

Most current theories of second language acquisition and current views on methods and approaches to teaching English as a second language place a high value on student participation and interaction in the language classroom. This interaction may be between teacher and student and/or student and student. Despite this, in many English classrooms around the world, students have very few opportunities to interact in the second language. In this paper, using the literature on second language acquisition research and methodology to prepare a case which highlights why teachers and course designers should find ways to incorporate second language interaction and student participation in their language classes despite the practical difficulties they may face.

Keywords: second language acquisition, participation, interaction

Introduction

An important practical strategy to enhance second language acquisition is to incorporate interaction in the classroom. Interaction can occur between student and a student, or between the teacher and a student, and is likely to increase not only opportunities for the students to receive comprehensible input but also encourage their effective output of the language to achieve communication (Brown, 2007). Whilst there are a number of theories which favor student participation and interaction, there are some practical limitations which teachers also need to overcome.

The Literature on Second Language Acquisition

This section will discuss interaction in second language acquisition by Krashen’s (1982) Input Hypothesis and Swain’s (1985) Output Hypothesis, and also about how Long (1996) has used input and output as necessary aspects of interaction.

Long (1996) devised the Interaction Hypothesis, which is derived from a social constructivist context in which conversational adjustments made during the negotiation of meaning create comprehensible input and maximize learners’ opportunities for second language acquisition. Long’s theory was a development of Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, which states that opportunities for second language acquisition are maximized when learners are exposed to language which is just a little beyond their current level of competence, therefore, if...
students want to learn a second language, they should aim for Comprehensible Input i + 1, through listening to oral messages that interlocutors direct to them and via reading written texts that sound them (Ortega, 2009). Swain (1985) argued that the role of comprehensible input on the development in particular of grammatical competence has been overstated, and that the role of comprehensible output is also significant. Hence, Long (1996) argued that tasks involving interaction and negotiation provide more comprehensible input and the interlocutor should modify their speech to negotiate for meaning with each other, known as the input in order to assist in communication to the native speakers to facilitate learning a second language. The teacher is not the only source of input in the classroom. Students also receive input from other learners. The interaction among the students is vital in oral activities, such as situation dialogue, role play, conversation, information-gap, and debate. Students in such activities have the chances to negotiate meaning with each other. Student to student interaction can enhance students’ abilities to work collaboratively and foster positive attitudes toward English learning (Johnson, 2000). Also, the teacher interacts with students by simplifying their input and makes clarification checks to help the students to understand the input. A question such as, “does that make sense?” will encourage the students to be more active and interact with the teacher in order to increase their understanding of the teacher’s input. The relationship between input and output is complementary, rather than alternative.

Methodologies

The benefits of student interaction and participation are paramount when learning a second language (Brown, 2007). It helps to engage the student’s mind and it can offer a good learning environment. Van Lier (1996) likes to use social interaction in the classroom to promote autonomy and increase awareness to achieve what Vygotsky (1978) argues as approaching the “zone of proximal development”. That is to say, during the learning process, a child needs a “zone” or space in which he can interact with others who are more skilled or proficient in an activity than the child is. Applied to language learning, the concept of a zone of proximal development would suggest that through interacting with the teacher and with other students in the classroom, learners can attain a higher level of learning intensity than if they simply sit and listen to the teacher. Student participation should therefore be encouraged, irrespective of the ability or age of the learners.

In order to create maximum opportunities of interaction in the classroom, Ellis (2005) suggests incorporating small group work into a lesson, because acquisition of rich discourse is more likely to occur when students interact among themselves. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006), group and pair work offer learners a lot of opportunities to practice in conversational interactions, thus leading to increased fluency and the ability to manage conversations in second language. Moreover, Richards and Lockhart (1996) state group work reduces the teacher’s control over the class and increases the amount of student interaction.

Interaction also encompasses opportunities for feedback as outlined by Gass and Selinker (2007). According to Long (1996), corrective feedback is effective in second language improvement in that students can perceive the differences between output and input by means of a negotiation of meaning. Also, Ellis (2008) claims that interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive corrective feedback, and through this process, language acquisition takes place. Ellis (2008) argues that learners need to negotiate meaning during conversation when communication problems occur, which lead to the use of various negotiation strategies, such as request for clarification, confirmation check, recast and repetition. Also, the student should be encouraged to
confirm, such as asking the teacher to repeat the phrase so it becomes a two-way feedback loop (Mackey, 2007).

**Practical Difficulties**

Despite the fact that interaction and student participation are crucial for second language learning as argued in the previous section, there are some practical difficulties to implement interaction in language classroom.

One of the main difficulties to overcome with teacher interaction is student reticence (Lee & Ng, 2009). Student reticence is defined as the unwillingness to participate, either due to shyness, introvert personality, or fear of speaking out. Lee and Ng (2009) discovered this was most noticeable in students of Asian origin. Liu and Littlewood (1997) also shared the same findings with Lee and Ng (2009) that students in East Asia demonstrated reluctance to participate in the classroom. What is more, students from China tend to be shy and they may feel that publicly displaying one’s knowledge in this way would be seen by their classmates as showing off. In our experience, in China, students are taught to be obedient and show respect to the teachers by sitting quietly and writing down what the teachers are saying and memorizing it after class. Hence, students might avoid answering questions because of the educational and cultural influence. Most students prefer to remain silent, and keep answers to themselves. This all leads to students adopting a passive attitude towards classroom interaction, and being reluctant to participate in speaking activities.

Other practical difficulties to implement communicative language teaching (CLT) classrooms are the external causes. Orafi and Borg (2009) claim that a new communicative English language curriculum has not been successfully implemented in Libya because of teachers’ beliefs, unsupportive contextual factors toward the changes and also a mismatch between the exams and the curriculum objectives. Therefore, teachers have difficulties implementing CLT. The same difficulties have been experienced in China when applying CLT; large class sizes, and grammar-based tests, create many obstacles to communicative teaching (Liao, 2004).

**Solutions**

Even though student reticence is a common problem in the classroom, the benefits of student participation are greater. Moreover, student reticence can be overcome through the teacher adopting an appropriate interaction strategy. Lee and Ng (2009) identify three types of interaction strategies, which are teacher fronted, facilitator orientated, and learner orientated. Lee and Ng’s findings show that a facilitator orientated strategy is most effective with students who are not willing to participate. A facilitator orientated strategy involves setting up a topic, using referential questions, reformulation, elaboration, comment, repetition, backchannels, giving content focused feedback and longer wait time (Lee & Ng, 2009). Moreover, it can make the teacher-controlled interaction enable learners to initiate speaking resulting in free flowing student-student interaction. When learners have interaction difficulties, strategies such as reformulation and elaboration can be used to develop learners’ confidence in using English to communicate among themselves. This strategy enables the teacher to develop more authentic dialogues with the students and offers more freedom than the IRF pattern exhibited with the teacher fronted strategy (Yashima, 2002).

Despite its limitations, to some extent, IRF pattern also helps English teachers adopt an interaction strategy, especially for the inexperienced teachers. Taking our context in a Chinese college, in our view, the English
classroom interaction should employ an IRF pattern to help students overcome reticence. According to IRF pattern, the letter “I” represents an initiating move, such as a question posed by the teacher. “R” is the response from the class, usually from an individual student, and “F” is the follow-up feedback or comment by the teacher. Classroom interaction depends on the meaning negotiated and understood through exchanges of discourse between the teacher and the students. Not all utterances are counted as interaction. Interaction exists when the teacher or a student initiates conversation, the students respond, and then teacher gives a follow-up response.

Richard Cullen (1998, p. 179) provides an example.

T: What’s the boy doing? (I)
S: He’s climbing a tree. (R)
T: That’s right. He is climbing a tree. (F)

Liu and Littlewood’s (1997) discovered that students preferred to work in pairs or groups, when engaging in language discussion. Harmer (2007) argues that pair work and group work will provoke the quieter students to join in discussion. Scrivener (2011) also points out that it is crucial for teachers to use pair work or group work to avoid students’ anxiety, develop their confidence, and produce more negotiation of meaning (Hedge, 2000).

The theories presented thus far can propose that interaction plays an important role in CLT. According to Brown (2007), in the era of CLT, interaction is the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about. However, there are many practical difficulties to implement CLT in language teaching classrooms. Harmer (2007) suggests that to deal with large class size, pair work and group work should be used to maximize the students’ participation. Hedge (2000) suggests that role-plays simulate the real world and learners might be encouraged to speak more freely by acting out the roles with a large number of participants.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, there are many benefits in using interaction and student participation to enhance second language learning. Long’s Interaction Hypothesis asserts that real communication takes place when people are able to interact and negotiate meaning with each other. Gass and Selinker also favor the use of classroom interaction and highlight the importance of providing explicit and implicit feedback to the students. However, in practice, it can be challenging to increase student participation due to student reticence and some external factors. Yet, there are many interaction strategies which teachers can employ to increase student participation in the classroom. The main notion is that teachers need to adopt a flexible approach and facilitator orientated approach, to increase student confidence in their ability to interact and participate actively in their learning.

**References**

Private Topic or Public One: On Topic Sentence Quality

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Topic effect on L2 writing has long been an issue of controversy. This study was carried out to investigate the influence of topic type on the quality of topic sentence. The participants, 150 college students at three different proficiency levels, were asked to write both on a private topic and a public topic. The results show that the participants on the whole wrote better on the public topic, and their proficiencies can be differentiated by the quality of their topic sentences. The public topic was conducive to the production of complete English discourse structures, as well as the generation of informative and predictive topic sentences. Moreover, the results also reveal the dynamic nature of contrastive rhetoric.

Keywords: topic effect, topic sentence, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writing, proficiency

Introduction

Much second language writing research has focused on topic effects (Hinkel, 2009; Bonzo, 2008; Sullivan, 2007; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982; QIN & GU, 2011). But most of the studies are interested in the use of certain syntactic and lexical features in L2 writing. The scant amount of research on the effects of public and private topics has produced inconclusive results. Hamp-Lyons and Mathia (1994) and Hinkel (2009) have found that public topic facilitates English writing while Reed and Vandeett (1985) have different results. Therefore, more research is needed to examine the impact of such essay topics.

Although topic sentence in L2 writing has been widely studied for decades, yet the major concern of the researchers is the indirectness of paragraphs against different cultures, such as Kaplan (2000), Hind (1987), and Connor (1996), or the placement of topic sentences (CHEN, 2011; WU, 2003). However, the research on the quality of topic sentences is scant. What is more, whether topic type has influence on the production of topic sentences is in need of research. To contribute to this domain, the present study focuses on topic types and makes an exploration into their effects on topic sentence quality.

Topic Effects on L2 Writing

Most of the studies on the effects of private topics and public ones reveal that public topics facilitate English writing. Hamp-Lyons and Mathia (1994) studied the scores of 8,000 essays written on 64 prompts. Their results showed that essays on private topics received lower scores than those on public topics since many L2 learners had less exposure to personal than academic topics and hence failed to use skillfully personal experience as evidence. Hinkel (2009) analyzed modal verb uses in L1 and L2 essays on five private and public topics, and found that the

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frequency rates of possibility and ability modal verbs are less topic-dependent than obligation and necessity modals in the L2 essays. The study concluded that public topics elicit fewer differences between L1 and L2 essays than topics in which personal experiences have to be drawn on because the former is less culturally-dependent. However, Reed and Vandett (1985) get different results. They analyzed the essays of 44 college freshmen in basic writing classes and found that the essays about group-phenomenon events had lower quality scores because of syntactic confusion than the essays about individually experienced events, although they contained more words per clause.

Generally speaking, the research mentioned above has examined whether topic type has an effect on the frequency of use of certain syntactic and lexical features in L2 writing. Few studies have investigated topic effects on topic sentences written by L2 students at different proficiency levels. More research is needed to identify such impact of essay topics.

**Research Questions**

Topic sentence in this study refers to the claim supporting the thesis statement. Many students, especially the middle group and the high group, tended to put each claim and its supporting sentences in a separate paragraph. In view of the inconsistent placement of the claim, the term “segmented discourse” (Asher, 1994) is used instead of “paragraph”, to refer to an argument, i.e., a claim together with its supporting sentences. Since a topic sentence serves not merely as a claim but also a summary of its supporting sentences, what really count is its lexical appropriateness and discourse relations between the topic sentence and its supporting sentences, which can be categorized into rhetorical mode. Since in the Chinese style of paragraph writing topic sentence is considered unnecessary and unimportant, the Chinese participants might transfer their L1 writing style. In view of that, discourse structure is also investigated in the study of topic sentence. To cover all these elements, an umbrella term “topic sentence quality” is employed. The research questions deal with two aspects.

1. Does topic type exert influence on the quality of the topic sentence on the whole?
2. Do the students at different proficiency level vary in the quality of topic sentence?

**Research Methods**

The essays analyzed in this study were written by 150 college and university students, of whom 50 were second-year English majors (high group), 50 first-year English majors (middle group), and another 50 first-year non-English majors (low group). All of the participants had already learned English exposition. The high group had already passed Test for English Major-Band 4 (TEM-4), and the middle group was preparing for the coming TEM-4 of the next year. And the low group was preparing for the College English Test-Band 4 (CET-4 for non-English major) which was much easier than TEM-4. In this study, they were asked to write two essays with prompts after class as usual homework and were permitted to consult dictionaries. The essay prompts were modeled on standardized tests such as TEM-4 and CET-4, for the purpose of eliciting essays in the rhetorical mode of exposition and informing a general audience. One essay had public topic “The Benefits of Travelling Abroad” and the other had private one “I Prefer to Work in…” The public topic was relatively remote to the students’ life since nearly none of them had traveled abroad or considered the travelling, although they knew much about the world from internet and TV. But their hot topic and major concern had been their future job since
they entered the college and university.

Based on the discourse topic theory (Asher, 1994), coherence theory (Giora, 1997), and Monroy-Casas’s (2008) guidelines, the topic sentence quality was divided into five ranks (LIU, 2012), roughly as follows:

- **Rank 0**: No topic sentence for a segmented discourse.
- **Rank 1**: No supporting sentence follows the topic sentence. Or the supporting sentences cannot support the topic sentence at all.
- **Rank 2**: The topic sentence is not fully supported by the other sentences.
- **Rank 3**: The topic sentence can summarize the supporting sentences but it is too general, and the adjectives are too vague.
- **Rank 4**: The topic sentence encapsulates appropriately the supporting sentences.

The average quality of topic sentence in each essay could be obtained by adding up the scores of all the topic sentences and then dividing the result by the total number of arguments. In addition, the median frequency rates of each rank in the essays were also calculated. The author of the paper evaluated the topic sentences of the compositions for two times, with an interval of two months. The final score of each topic sentence is the average of the two scores. In data analysis, non-parametric statistical comparisons of the topic types were employed because neither the frequency rates nor the generalization rate was normally distributed.

**Results**

Table 1 demonstrates that topic type exerts an influence on the topic sentence quality on the whole and that the topic sentences of the essays on the public topic have higher quality than those on the private topic (2.54 > 2.24) and the difference is statistically significant (-2.98***, \( p = 0.003 \)). To be specific, each group performed better in the essays on the public topic than on the private one. However, only high group shows significant difference \( (p = 0.03) \) but in the other two groups the difference between the two topics is weak. In addition, it can be noted in Table 2 that the topic sentence quality in the two essays could differentiate the students of different proficiencies because the difference among the three groups is statistically significant. The mean scores of the low group in the two essays are around 1.5, those of the middle group are around 2.5 and those of the high group are above 3.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic type</th>
<th>Low group</th>
<th>Middle group</th>
<th>High group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private topic</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public topic</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Z value</strong></td>
<td>(-1.26, p = 0.21)</td>
<td>(-1.56, p = 0.12)</td>
<td>(-2.13*, p = 0.03)</td>
<td>(-2.98**, p = 0.003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *\( p < 0.05 \), **\( p < 0.01 \).

Table 1 only displays a global result. The specific results can be seen from Table 3 which shows the proportion of all kinds of ranks. Rank 1 and rank 2 were combined to be considered as a whole because they both denoted the case of “failing to summarize” which had a radical difference from rank 0 (i.e., incomplete discourse structure without topic sentence) and from rank 3 (i.e., the topic sentence can summarize the supporting sentences
but it is too broad). In Table 3, rank 0 occupies the least of the proportion in both the high group (3%) and the middle group (5%), and the second least is rank 3. But it is opposite in the low group: Rank 0 and rank 4 have nearly the same percentage higher than rank 3. Moreover, the gaps among the three groups in ranks 1 & 2 and in rank 4 are wide: In the high group, rank 4 takes up the majority of the proportion while ranks 1 & 2 dominate in the low group; but the dominance of ranks 1 & 2 becomes less salient in the middle group. In a general term, the sequence of the frequency rates is: ranks 1 & 2 (52%) > rank 4 (35%) > rank 3 (8%) > rank 0 (5%). Figure 1 displays the dynamic nature of the four ranks.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic type</th>
<th>Low group</th>
<th>Middle group</th>
<th>High group</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private topic</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public topic</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *** \( p < 0.001 \).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Rank 4 (%)</th>
<th>Rank 3 (%)</th>
<th>Ranks 1 &amp; 2 (%)</th>
<th>Rank 0 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low group</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle group</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High group</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Topic effects can be seen in Table 1 in that the students, especially the high group, wrote better on the public topic than on the private one. The lower mean quality score (2.24) in the private topic essays means the students could barely summarize their segmented discourses by topic sentences or develop their topic sentences at a full length. But the mean score in the public topic essays is nearly 3 (2.54), which means that the topic sentences
could function as summarizers, that is to say, the segmented discourses were developed well around the topic sentences. A contributing factor may be the English writing instruction. In China, most of the students at the tertiary level taking their English writing course write more on public topics since the ultimate goal of the training is TEM4 or CET4. It can be speculated that just because all of the students had learned expository writing skills for standardized tests which had a preference to public topics, the public topic in this study might activate their knowledge and skills and it was easier to apply them to such a topic. However, the private topic offered them relatively more freedom from choosing the topic to deciding the content. Just because they had so many choices about where to work and so many reasons to support their thesis statements, some students failed to fully develop their claims and switched to new reasons abruptly and unconsciously. For Example (1), when the readers read the topic sentence they expect that why or how “life in big cities is much more convenient” is going to be explained. But there is only one incomplete sentence supporting the claim and the third sentence switches to “comfort”. The inadequate development of the segmented discourse undermines the topic sentence quality. That example also reveals the transfer of the Chinese writing style. In Chinese writing instruction, the students are asked to “use fewer words to express the same ideas; therefore, at least some of the writer’s ideas have to be written suggestively” (X. WANG, 1994, p. 225). Consequently, their paragraphs are not fully developed to support the topic sentences. Just as Hinkel (2002) has found in his study, the Chinese students failed to provide specific information.

Example (1) The last but not the least, life in big cities is much more convenient. Fast public transport, a variety of goods to choose from and plenty of public places for enjoyment. Above all, the perfect health care system and other insurance make you live in great comfort.

Moreover, some students were eager to express their ideas so much so that they took an emotional style without providing any topic sentence or supporting sentences. In Example (2), “If I can, I prefer to work in Xiangyang—my hometown, forever, with you” is not the topic sentence but the thesis statement. The thesis statement was repeated for several times. That is consistent with one of the Chinese writing skills—resorting to emotion and appealing to the readers. The Chinese books for writing such as Textbook for Argumentative Writing by T. S. WANG (2006) and New Strategies for Argumentative Writing by YU (2009) advocate that writers may persuade the readers with emotion and many ways of resorting to emotion are proposed. As X. WANG (1994, p. 214) has pointed out that English writers state their ideas in words while Asians write with emotion as readers need to feel or guess the ideas from the writing so as to appreciate it.

Example (2) If I can, I prefer to work in Xiangyang—my hometown, forever, with you.

Let’s ignore the so-called dreams or struggle. Just stay in our hometown, our familiar hometown, where we can call out the names of each street. We know each of our neighbors. When we want to play majiang, karaoke or go for shopping, no more than half an hour, every of us will be there.

If I can, I prefer to work in Xiangyang, forever, with you.

We can accompany with our parents and stick to our hometown when we feel bored. We can go to Wuhan for fun, which will just take a few hours’ driving. During festival, we can visit each of our friends, have a party and if who dares not to come, we just need to take a taxi and pull him out.

In general, the participants performed better when given a public topic. The result corroborates Hamp-Lyons and Mathia (1994) and Hinkel (2009) from a different perspective of L2 writing.
Apart from that, the topic sentence quality in both the private topic essays and the public ones can differentiate the learners at different proficiency levels. The ability of discourse organization and coherence is a part of language performance. And language performance improves with proficiency levels. On the other hand, the measurement of the topic sentence quality proves to be objective and reasonable.

**Conclusion**

The results of this study demonstrate that topic sentence production is affected by the essay topic to a great extent and the degree of topic sentence quality can differentiate the learners of different proficiencies. It is not because the private topic was more culturally-dependent as proposed by Hinkel (2009), but because the higher familiarity and more freedom debilitate the L2 learners to use the English way of discourse organization. Specifically, the influence is mainly on the discourse structures and the appropriateness of generalization.

Although Kaplan (2000), X. WANG (1994), and Monroy-Casas (2008) contend that linear rhetoric is in no way superior to non-linear rhetoric, and what exists is a different way of presenting ideas across cultures, yet in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching, it is still expected that the students (especially those future teachers in normal universities) to acquire the culture as well as the language since the two parts are inseparable. As is shown in this study, for the Chinese learners of English familiar private topics cannot facilitate English writing since their practice in writing is mainly oriented to academic tests. Against the background of writing instruction in China, private topics seem to be more difficult to write on. However, preparing the students for the standard tests should not be the ultimate goal of English writing instruction at tertiary level. And English writing instruction should not neglect free private topics. The training may begin with easier public topics, and then move to private ones. The difficulty of private topics lies in the competition of too many ideas. So another recommendation for English writing instruction is to put on restrictions on the private topics at the very beginning, and then to give the learners more and more freedom gradually as well as more reminding or requirement of the English way of writing.

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The Register Restraint on Characteristics in Chinese Text*

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Syntactic expressions in different texts are varied. They are restricted by registers, which are reflected in three aspects: differences in spoken text and written text, narrative text and non-narrative text, children text and adults text. In another word, the external form of Chinese text is restricted by occasions and conditions in which the language is used. Chinese text characteristic is the foundation of text teaching as a second language, but the research about Chinese text is rather not enough. This paper has practical value for teaching Chinese as a second language.

Keywords: textual characteristics, register restraint, style differences, genre differences, acquisition mode differences

Introduction

It is a common view that Chinese text teaching as a second language is quite important, especially in middle-high level for Chinese learners, Chinese text characteristic is the foundation of text teaching, generally speaking. But the research about Chinese text is rather not enough. What is the Chinese text characteristic? What is the difference between different types of texts? That is the reason why the paper is written.

Systemic Functional Linguistics believes that the register is the range of occasion or field the language is used, and three main contextual factors determine the register: field of text, mode of text, and tenor of text (ZHU, 1987).

Field of text includes technical terminology like commercial language, linguistic terminology, and non-technical terms like daily conversation; mode of text includes spoken language and written language (which is usually termed as “style” by scholars of Chinese grammar); tenor of text includes narrative and non-narrative (which is called “genre” by Chinese grammar scholars), also includes formal style and informal style.

Systemic Functional Linguistics holds a view that there are different textual variants in different tenor of text and field of text. For example, distinctive text characteristics can be naturally shown in various texts such as news broadcasts, conversation with children, oral narration, etc.

In the following passage, based on the above theory and the pedagogic requirements of teaching Chinese as a second language, the author will analyze the differences of generative form of Chinese text in different contexts—the register restraint on textual expressions, including restraint on words organization and syntactic sentence.

Spoken/written text in style, narrative/non-narrative text in genre, and children/adults text in acquirers will be analyzed in this paper.

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The Restraint on Style Differences

The concept “Style” raises much dispute in the field of rhetoric in China. Some study it from textural perspective (CHEN, 1979), some from the behavioral angle (LIU, 1994) and other scholars have shown their view in its definition (X. LI, 2005). Some think that “Style” is the most original, essential linguistic means and mechanism to realize direct human communication (FENG, 2011).

Its concept will not be discussed in this paper but the differences of two styles on words organization and syntactic representation from the perspective of current situation of teaching Chinese as a second language, while spoken language and written language are classified as subordinate words of Style.

First, look at the examples of FENG Sheng-li (2011):

Example (1) a. Today, my father mai and du a book to me. (mai and du, Chinese pronunciation, to buy and read)
   b. Yesterday, the leader asked people to mai and kan the new version of the Constitution. (to buy and read)
   c. Yesterday, the leader asked people to goumai and yuedu the new version of the Constitution.
      (formal, to buy and read)

Generally, it is thought that the usage of “Verb + Verb” is not right in the field of Chinese grammar. But here the author (including readers) could not simply assert it because sentence c, with the same meaning, is quite acceptable in written language, while sentences a and b are barely acceptable in spoken language.

The paper shows from Example (1) that different styles with the same lexical meaning have different syntactic text representation, which, to some extent, inspires the reflection upon whether the commonly accepted syntactic rule is universally applicable.

Then the paper shows another two examples by FANG Mei (1994), in which some words are put at the end of a sentence to attract listeners’ attention (see Examples (2)-(3)).

Example (2) Do not interrupt me, go or not go on earth, ni? (ni, Chinese pronunciation, you)
Example (3) Why don’t you speak, nice looking, Daoshi? (Daoshi, Chinese pronunciation, seldom in the end, means is or not)

These phenomena are seldom seen in formal written text like political articles. So some scholars believe that the grammar of written text is different from that of the spoken language (Brazil, 1995); and some scholars (FENG, 2011) have even coined a specific concept called “Style grammar” so as to serve the requirement of distinguishing styles, in which it is stated that grammar serves styles that in return contribute to grammar.

Actually, whether the grammars of spoken language and written language are two different grammars still need further discussion. But it is a fact that different styles indeed show some differences in texts.

The Restraint on Genre Differences

The genre here refers to narrative and non-narrative in general textual research. The non-narrative includes expository text and argumentative text.

Previous scholars (LV, 1985) have noticed the differences of Chinese syntactic structure in different genres. For example, when distinguishing “you” sentence from “bei” sentence (you and bei, , , , Chinese pronunciation, both mean by, but with their own distinctive usage), which can easily confound foreign students,
LV Wen-hua said that “you” sentence is less widespread than “bei” sentence in frequency of use. But in very few articles, “you” sentence can also be used very centralized, for instance, in a report named “TV series Huo Yuanjia will be broadcast from today”, there are 35 “you” sentences among the all 245 sentences. At the same time, the author also notices that “you” sentence enjoys high frequency in sports news and artistic performances, but “bei” sentence seems to be used more in texts conveying knowledge.

Nowadays, some scholars discriminate the similarities and differences between “yushi” (yushi, ฎ, means then, so) and “suoyi” (suoyi, ṣ, means so) (GUO, 2006) from the perspective of textual genre. For example:

Example (4) The red light turned on, suoyi/yushi (means so/then, so) our car stopped.

Both “suoyi” and ”yushi” can be used here, but how do they differ with each other? The author believes that the essential difference is reflected by the fact that they highlight different textual characteristics of sentence groups or sentences. It is more appropriate to use “yushi” in simple narrative (see Example (5)).

Example (5) Early in the morning, we climbed to the top of the rear cab, lifted a roof, put the pedal on the sides of the bulkhead, and pedalled on them with the rudder in hands. Yushi/suoyi (means then/so) the boatman who was standing in the front of the boat took up the pole and shoved the boat off.

It is more appropriate to use “suoyi” (means so) in expositive text and argumentative text, in which traits and causes are emphasized (see Examples (6)-(7)).

Example (6) Her skin is smooth, but a little bit green, suoyi/Yushi (means so/then) it looks not so moist.

Example (7) It is good to get 60 points, suoyi/Yushi (means so/then) you should be happy.

Example (4) is not a simple text, so both of the terms are correct, but there are minor semantic differences. “yushi” (means then, so) narrates things simply, but “suoyi” (means so), meanwhile, highlights the reason for the car stopping.

Concerning the fact that genre affects syntax, FANG Mei (2007) also refers that because narrative is generally less involved in interactive communication, the temporal succession and agent orientation are the important components. Therefore, features of narrative text should be procedural and eventual. However, in non-narrative genre, such as dialogue, its key point is exchanging information and ideas, so the scene and the comment come to be the most important part. Therefore, in the author’s opinion, this can explain the reason for the agentive object sentence (such as gebi ganmao le jige ren, ṣ, means several people next door have caught a cold), which can only be used in dialogue instead of narrative in Chinese.

It is obvious, in the above illustration, that, different genres, e.g., narrative, expositive, or argumentative text, have restraints on their syntactic project; in other words, genre has an influence on text. This may be the result of “genre priority principle” (ZHANG, 2006), in which it is stated that every text must belong to one genre, and every genre has a macro-semantic structure. The modes realizing these structures will be selected after the genre selection.

The Restraint on Acquisition Mode Differences

It is known that in the process of first language acquisition, children begin with single words and then make progress to two-word sentences. Finally, they reach the stage of simple sentences. The hierarchical system of
language leads to the fact that the process of first language acquisition has its own rules. Children have the ability of assembling marks chain into a whole syntactic structure (ZHOU, 1999). When it comes to reading materials, the text must be ensured to be adapted to their ability for comprehension and in the meantime, the cohesion and coherence between syntactic structures should be recognized to guarantee a clear understanding of syntactic principles and semantic relations.

To make younger readers understand the text, the traits of “text” for children must differentiate from that for adults. Those differences can be grasped on lexical and syntactic level.

The following example for “children text” (see Example (8)), excerpted from a Chinese elementary school textbook, is a well-known story named “The Tadpoles Look for Their Mommy”:

Example (8)

Yi tiao dayu you guolai le. (A big fish came over). The little tadpoles saw the fish had two big eyes and a big month. They (little tadpoles, but omitted in Chinese ) thought that the fish was their mommy. So, they followed her and cried: “Mommy, mommy.”

“No, I’m not your mommy”, the fish said with a smile, “I am little fish’s mommy. Your mommy has four legs.”

“Thank you! Thank you! We are going to look for our mommy.” They were swimming around.

Yi zhi da wugui you guolai le. (A big tortoise came over). The little tadpoles saw that the tortoise had four legs. They (omitted in Chinese) thought she was their mother. So, they followed her and cried: “Mommy, mommy.”

The tortoise smiled and said: “No, I’m not your mommy. I’m a tortoise. I am little tortoise’ mommy. Your mommy has a big white belly.”

“Thank you! We are going to look for our mommy. See you later.”

“Good luck!” They went on swimming.

Yi zhi da bai’e you guolai le. (A big white goose came over). The little tadpoles saw its white belly. They (omitted in Chinese) thought happily that they found their mommy this time. So, they followed her and shouted: “Mommy, mommy.”

The goose smiled and said: “Sorry, I’m not your mommy. I am little geese’s mommy. Your mommy dresses in green and sings “gegege.”

“Thank you! We are going to look for our mommy. See you later.”

This is a story about little tadpoles seeking their mother for three times. In order to adapt to children’s cognitive ability, the text demonstrates its distinctive characteristics.

Firstly, it lies in its simplicity of words organization. One word is repeated several times in the text, which reduces the difficulty of reading. Meanwhile, words such as “came over”, “saw”, “thought”, “follow”, and “mommy” have been used twice or three times as cohesion measures:

came over—saw—thought—follow—mommy

Secondly, the ellipsis in the following sentences has the same syntactic position with the subject of the first sentence and its explanation is constrained by parallelism principle (R. LI, SHI, & HU, 2012).

Parallelism principle should meet the requirement that the omitted part should syntactically and semantically have the same meaning with the preceding part. The elliptical words can be easily reconstituted in accordance with that principle and children’s cognitive ability. For instance, the omitted item “little tadpoles” can easily be restored in the subject position. Its semantic meaning agrees with “little tadpoles” in the sentence that precedes. The ellipsis will not become an obstacle of comprehension for children.

Thirdly, monotonous sentential patterns form the typical syntactic features. Nearly every sentence in this story follows a basic agent-action structure. All this simple sentences are connected into text and repeated for
several times, adhering to the characteristics of children language acquisition, which include imitation, selective imitation (children choose to learn specific structures and contents spoken by adults), and syntactic assimilation (According to the generality of syntactic structures, language learners use learned structures to explore new sentences).

An “adult text”, extracted from Rickshaw Boy by Lao She (see Example (9)), will be analyzed in comparison.

Example (9)

祥子的身上没有任何累赘，一件灰色单军服上身，和一条蓝布军裤，都被汗沤得奇臭——自从（）还没到他身上的时候已经如此……闻着现在身上的臭汗味，他以前的挣扎与成功看得分外光荣，原来的光荣放大了十倍，他越想着过去便越恨那些兵们，他的衣服鞋帽，洋车，甚至于系腰的布带，都（）他们抢了去；（）只留给

Translation: Xiangzi was wearing only a thin gray tunic and a pair of blue cotton army trousers, both reeking of sweat and little more than rags—they’d been like that before he put them on. All he could think of were the white jacket and indigo-dyed lined pants he was wearing when they took them off him—they were so clean and so smart. There were nicer clothes than that in the world, but he knew how hard it had been for someone like him to be dressed that way. The sweat-stink of what he was wearing now reminded him of all he’d struggled for and made what he had accomplished seem nobler. The more he thought about his past, the deeper his hatred for the soldiers. They had taken his clothes, his shoes, his rickshaw, even the sash he used as a belt, in return for bruises and welts all over his body and blisters on his feet. (translated by Howard Goldblatt)

Compared to the “Child text”, the structure of this story is apparently more complex.

Initially, “a thin gray tunic and a pair of blue cotton army trousers” is treated as subject in Chinese MS (The author discusses the novel according to Chinese MS, same as followings). On the contrary, when it is omitted, it is put after the preposition “cong” (means from) in the first brackets. What is more, the missing word in the second brackets is “they”, substitute for “Those soldiers”, “Those soldiers” is located in the subject position; however, “they” is placed as an object after the preposition “bei” (means passive voice).

In the light of syntax, this text not only includes sentences with structure of “agent-action”, but also has other various syntactic structures such as “bā” sentence (subject + “我把” indicating the active voice, + object + complement, is usually a verbal phrase), “bèi” sentence (subject + “被” indicating passive voice, + object + complement, is usually a verbal phrase), “bǐ” sentence (compare A with B). Due to abundant words and variations, this text becomes a colorful painting.

From the comparisons and contrasts between “Child Text” and “Adult Text”, it is clear that acquisition differences also exert influence on lexical and syntactic structure in “Text”.

Practical Value of This Study

Three aspects have been discussed on the register restraint in Chinese text, which is of great significance to teaching Chinese as a second language.

Firstly, for foreign learners in primary stage of Chinese, very colloquial, inverted sentences and sentences which are similar to the syntactic features should not be taught in spoken classes.

Secondly, some questions in Chinese grammar should be explained in the context of characteristics of genre; otherwise, minor usage differences will be hard to distinguish.
Finally, instead of in the pursuit of famous authors’ novels with complex sentences and word organization, the appropriate texts chosen as materials for Chinese children, are more suitable for foreigners of primary level. It will lower learning difficulties and thus lead to an effective acquisition.

Conclusion

It is the fact that different styles indeed show some differences in texts, and different structures. These structures will be selected after the genre selection.

Comparing “Child Text” and “Adult Text”, it is clear that acquisition differences also exert influence on lexical and syntactic structure in “Text”.

Some questions in Chinese grammar should be explained in the context of characteristics of genre, otherwise, minor usage differences will be hard to distinguish.

References

The Dialectic of Borders and Multiculturalism
in Naomi Nye’s *Habibi*

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This paper investigates how the Arab-American writer Naomi Nye addresses the dialectic between borders and multiculturalism in her award-winning young adult novel *Habibi* (1997). Critiquing the essentialist view that presumes fixed boundaries for a culture, Nye promotes the alternative view that assumes individuals’ power of defining and redefining their cultural identities in a multicultural society. The author argues that Nye’s position is that borders/boundaries and geographical demarcations are flimsy, arbitrary and create divisions, animosities and hatred between people and nations whereas multiculturalism engenders feelings of reconciliation, friendship, and understanding. Though borders and boundaries can be divisive, cultural variety and hybridity can be inclusive. To counteract the argument of borders/boundaries, Nye posits the argument of multiculturalism. In this paper, the author intends to examine the assumptions of the physical and the cultural borders rhetoric in comparison with the multicultural approach narrative. It is the dialectic of these two opposing forces that shapes the events and the final outcome of the action and events of this novel.

*Keywods*: Palestinian, Jewish, American, borders, multiculturalism, identity, Nye

It is important to note that multiculturalism does not share postmodernist stance. Its passions are political; its assumptions… empirical; its conception of identities visceral. For it, there is no doubting that history is something that happened and that those happenings have left their mark within our collective consciousness. History for multiculturalists is not a succession of dissolving texts, but a tense tangle of past actions that have reshaped the landscape, distributed the nation's wealth, *established boundaries* [emphasis added], engendered prejudices, and unleashed energies.

—Joyce Appleby

**Introduction and Biographical Information**

*Habibi* (1997) is a novel by the Palestinian-American author Naomi Nye. It concentrates on the return of a Palestinian-American family from St. Louis all the way to Palestine, the father’s original homeland. Though the father, Mr. Abboud grew up in Palestine, his family knows very little about their Arab heritage. Meeting her grandmother and the rest of her relatives, Liyana, the heroine, finds herself a stranger who cannot speak Arabic or understand Arab culture. Liyana is torn between two completely different cultures, American and Arab cultures. It is not until she meets Omer that her homesickness fades. As Omer is Jewish, their friendship faces great obstacles. Through their rapidly growing relationship, the two protagonists manage to bring a better sense of understanding and greater reconciliation between Jewish and Arab characters, a move that is symbolically meant

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to represent a call for Arabs and Jews to get to know and understand each other with a view to establishing a greater hope for peace in the conflict-torn Palestine and the racial discrimination- and isolation-ridden Israel.

The poignant story of Liyana and her family parallels Naomi Nye’s own life and experiences as an Arab-American living in the United States. Nye was born in St. Louis, Missouri to a Palestinian father and a German-American mother. Much like Liyana in *Habibi*, her mother is an American and her father is a Palestinian. When she was 14, her family moved to Jerusalem where she attended one year of high school after which her family moved to San Antonio, Texas. In Jerusalem, Nye absorbed many stories, impressions, and perceptions of the differences in cultures and the similarities among people. Many of her works draw on her experiences with people she observed and family members she learned about or knew well during her stay and her visits to Palestine and Israel. Nye deals with universal/cosmopolitan themes and focuses on similarities and differences between cultures and generations of families drawn from her own multicultural adolescent experiences. Her novel *Habibi* deals with immigration, travel, borders, multicultural issues, love, and friendship.

Nye is an internationally acclaimed author of several novels, collections of poems and short stories, children’s books, nonfiction essays, and critical articles and editor of several poetry anthologies. She is also a songwriter and a translator of some important Arabic works into English. She has received many awards and medals for her literary achievements. Nye’s American and Palestinian heritage and multicultural adolescent experiences give her a rich personal background from which she can draw emotions, themes, and characters in her novels and poems.

**Review of Related Literature**

Nye’s novel *Habibi* has been the subject of various reviews, critical comments, academic articles, and university theses. Most of the previous studies of the novel have concentrated on such universal motifs as love, family, war, and peace, adjusting to change, ethnicity, identity, and culture. Several articles on Nye’s works, including her novels, have appeared in a good number of academic journals. In addition, many biographical sketches of Nye and interviews with her have appeared in different sources. Many of Nye’s works have also been anthologized in various collections and volumes of American literature.

In his Critical Survey of Poetry, *American Poets* (2011, pp. 1435-1442), Reisman gives a brief critical survey of Nye’s profile, her poetry, novels, achievements and a general evaluation of her works as a whole. In his article entitled “Border Shifting in Naomi Nye’s *Habibi*”, Yousef (2013) investigates how Nye’s novel *Habibi* addresses the theme of border shifting from a postmodernist perspective that deconstructs the traditional view of borders meant to maintain exclusion and hegemony and instead considers them as being often flimsy, malleable, and changeable. Alkhadra and Majdoubeh’s article (2014) on *Habibi* explores “neo”- and “post”-romanticism in Nye’s works and thoughts with special emphasis on this issue in her poems.

Several theses have also been written on various aspects of Nye’s works, addressing such questions as identity, hybridity, and political themes. Of these is Inas Al-Masri’s (2001) study entitled “The Middle East in Naomi Nye’s Poetry” in which she investigates the cultural and the political dimensions in her writings, particularly her poetry. A. T. Abdelrazeq’s (2005) thesis concentrates on hyphenated identity and border crossing in contemporary literature by Arab American women, including Naomi Nye. In addition, Wafa Al-Khatib’s (2009) thesis examines such general issue as postcolonialism, multiculturalism, and hybridity in Nye’s *Sitti Secrets, Habibi*, and *19 Varieties of Gazelle Poems of the Middle East* and *Red Suitcase*.

Despite this wide spectrum of research topics on Nye’s works in general and *Habibi* in particular, no study, to the author’s best knowledge, has explored the relationship or the dialectic between the concepts of borders and multiculturalism. The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate Nye’s treatment of the restrictions and isolationism of borders (or closed-border, to be more exact) mentality and the open vision of multiculturalism.

**Significance and Objectives**

Nye tackles in her works such prominent themes as hyphenated and multiple identities, bi-cultural and multicultural issues, political, social and racial matters, and many other universal and global themes. Although these themes have received considerable attention, the relationship between the arguments of borders and multiculturalism has not been given the attention it deserves. The significance of this study, therefore, lies in its attempt to explore the dialectical tension between the arguments of borders and multiculturalism in Nye’s novel *Habibi*, viewed mainly from a psycho-cultural dimension.

**Discussion**

In its general drift, *Habibi* can be seen as a novel about borders and multiculturalism. This paper is concerned with the representation of the powers of borders, frontiers, and geo-political maps as contrasted with the arguments of multiculturalism, plurality, and hybridity as presented in Nye’s *Habibi*. This postcolonial text abounds with references to borders, fences, checkpoints on the one hand and meeting-points, trips, visits and social encounters between Jews and Palestinians, Israelis and Arabs on the other. It is also replete with references to multiculturalism, diversity, identity, hybridity, reconciliation, and socio-cultural relations between Palestinians and Jews. Characters from both sides cross borders and on the way many of the Palestinian characters are subjected to humiliating treatment by the Israeli side and many others die or are humiliated inside their territory. Conversely, characters sometimes cross borders to meet with others from the opposite side or to make exchange visits and establish friendly and even love relationships as evidenced in Liyana-Omer relationship and the exchange visits between Liyana and Omer and between Omer and Liyana’s family and their
Borders

It is worth noting at the outset that in this article, the expression “border-mentality” is used in the sense of closed- rather than open-border mentality. Broadly speaking, a border is a real or artificial line that separates geographic areas. Borders can be geographic or political or even psychological and can take different forms and shapes: physical (concrete objects on the ground), conceptual (in the imagination), psychological, gender, ethnic, cultural, economic, political, etc.. Often, physical borders fall along natural boundaries like rivers or mountain ranges or may be arbitrarily imposed by force or military power. Nevertheless, borders can be flimsy, unstable and can change over time. As Cooper, Nicholson, and Bélisle (2007) observe:

In many cases borders may represent Freud’s reality principle; the arbitrary fact of power that limits our choices and our potential. On the other hand, a border is at best a fiction, at worst a lie…. Borders may exist more in our heads than on the ground. (p. 1)

Borders play a significant role in shaping human societies as they have cultural, economic, and political effects. A cultural border connotes a barrier that a more powerful side constructs to guard its own political power, cultural heritage and privileges. Many times, political borders divide groups of people who share a common religion, culture, ethnic origin, or language. Since borders contain both geographical and political implications, they are likely to bring crucial consequences in domestic and international politics. To many scholars a border is not a neutral demarcation line. It is a symbol of power that imposes inclusion and exclusion. The more privileged and dominant side will actively control the border to serve its own interests. Although some scholars believe we are living in a globalized world where state borders are becoming obsolete and are no longer barriers to the movement of goods, ideas, and people, there have been widespread arguments that borders are still significant and even that they have become more important than before in the process of globalization (Abdulsattar, 2013).

Sometimes, countries may wish to have their state based on their ethnic identity as it is the case with Israel which is trying to establish an all-Jewish state to the exclusion of its Palestinian-Arab population. This policy is clearly adumbrated by its building of walls of separation between Palestinian territories and Israel and between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Indeed, the borders between Israel and its Arab neighbors are one of the most heavily militarized borders in the world. The Israeli West Bank barrier or the “Separation Wall” is a separation barrier between Palestinians and Israelis. Expected to exceed 700 kilometers in its total length, the wall virtually undermines any hope for peace by unilaterally establishing new borders.

Habibi was conceived and written in the period following the Oslo Accords (signed in 1993) which brought a glimmer of hope for the peace process in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The novel appeared three years before the convening and the eventual failure of the Camp David Summit of 2000. Encouraged by what seemed at that time a good chance for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, Nye seems to have written this novel as a reflection of her hopes for a final peace and understanding in the region. That is why we see the novelist adopting a twofold attitude of a clear condemnation of borders, alienation, isolation and monoculturalism and an apparent call for multiculturalism, reconciliation, and inclusivity rather than confrontation and armed resistance as is the case in many other comparable works that fall under the label of “resistance literature”.

In the novel, Mr. Abboud, also called Poppy, fled his country Palestine after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war but is
now making a comeback to his native country after a period of study and work as a doctor in the United States. “Only recently he [Liyana’s father] grew hopeful about Jerusalem and his country again. Things started changing for the better. Palestinians had public voices again” (p. 931), writes Liyana in her report to her history teacher. Arriving at Tel-Aviv airport, Abboud is surprised to see how the situation has radically changed. What used to be the Palestinian homeland has now changed into an Israeli homeland or a Jewish state. While Abboud asserts he is a Palestinian coming back to his country, the Israeli soldiers consider him as an alien who should be checked and searched before letting him in. Indeed, the whole Abboud family are subjected to a humiliating treatment at the airport as are all their relatives who have come to see them (pp. 34-36, 44).

Israeli occupation has resulted in devastating consequences for the Palestinian Arabs who still live inside Israel and in the Palestinian territories or what the Palestinians would call Palestine. Military checkpoints are erected everywhere (pp. 44, 101), barbed wire fences and no-entry signs are frequently seen (p. 102) and all Palestinians are threatened with Israeli guns and bad treatment (p. 51). Nye vividly depicts the borders erected inside Palestine, which are called “barbed wires”. These barbed wires do not only separate families from each other; they also separate families from their houses and their property. The fences, enforced by the Israeli army in different Palestinian cities, separate people and are borders through which the Palestinians can occasionally see their old houses and close relatives. The borders imposed by the Israeli authorities/colonialists/occupiers, have contributed to the emergence of refugee camps all over Palestine, a sight that attracts the Abboud family on their way to Sitti’s home. Separated from the Jewish towns, these refugee camps highlight the deepening division and the growing rift between the Palestinians and the Jews, the indigenous inhabitants and the outside occupiers who now consider themselves the real owners of the land.

Border mentality seems to be everywhere. For instance, a Jew tells Liyana, the heroine of the novel, not to buy from an Arab and to go instead to the Jewish part of the city (p. 95). In addition, there are frequent references to Israeli raids on Palestinians’ homes (p. 184), the searching and exploding of Palestinian homes and the demolition of whole Palestinian quarters to build new homes for the Jewish settlers (p. 188). Many Palestinians are also jailed, including Abboud and some of his relatives (p. 223) and others are detained, persecuted, imprisoned, or terrified. Other characters are subjected to humiliating treatment by Israeli soldiers and many others lose their lives during the course of the novel—an act that is clearly emblematic of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the great suffering the Palestinians have been enduring in their homeland and across the borders. These boundaries separate people, causing thereby great hostilities, deep political tension and a large cultural rift between the opposing groups of the population.

It is noteworthy that the novel’s title “Habibi” undermines the idea of imposed borders. In Arabic the literal meaning of this word is “my beloved”. The term has also the meaning of “friend” or “darling”. It can also serve as a term of endearment. Hebrew has the same or similar word. Indeed, it is one of many shared words in the two languages, Arabic and Hebrew. As used in the novel, the term does not only refer to the love story between the heroine and the hero Omer and Liyana; it also suggests that borders which separate people may be nothing more than artificial lines created by politicians and national and cultural prejudices. Drawing upon this notion, Nye stresses the arbitrariness of such demarcations. She illustrates this point through the love relationship between the two protagonists of the novel, the theme around which the main action of the novel revolves.

When traveling with her family to Sitti’s (the Arabic word for grandmother) village, Liyana does not
imagine any demarcation line between the inhabitants of Palestine, the Jews and the Palestinians and is baffled by the numerous fences and checkpoints along the way. Liyana had already expressed her surprise and indignation when she and her family were made to go through so many procedures and checks at the airport (p. 36). Nye stresses the arbitrariness and the meaninglessness of such demographic and cartographic demarcations and highlights the inextricable relationship between Arabs and Jews. Responding to Liyana’s question whether the Jews and Arabs secretly love one another, Abboud thinks “they are bonded for life” (p. 73). Liyana’s father realizes the futility of the constant line-drawing by the Israeli politicians as it would not metaphorically separate anything or anyone but only provokes acts of violence on both sides of the divide. On his way to his former village, the father experiences a lot of suffering watching the barbed wires and the walls of separation constructed by the Israelis and expresses his anger and frustration to see them (pp. 250-251).

Border mentality seems to have led to a deep rift between Palestinians and Israelis and to the great hostilities and acts of violence that characterize their relationship. A good example of such violent and destructive actions is the smashing of Sitti’s ancestral house. The old house is also seriously damaged for no good reason at all (p. 185). The Israeli police, searching for a relative of Sitti, stormed the house, following the bomb explosion that killed some Israelis. They smashed Sitti’s bathroom and played havoc with her home. Obviously, the house has a great significance for the Palestinians. For them, the house symbolizes their identity and their nationhood. Not only have their lands been occupied by the Jewish army, but also their houses. Indeed, the demolition of Sitti’s home comes as a great cause of trouble and anxiety for the whole family and their neighbors.

Though this is not clearly stated in the novel, the Israelis’ interest in building walls and in setting up boundaries of different kinds seems to be prompted by various factors, most important of which is the legacy of the Jewish religion’s superiority, to which one can add the ghetto mentality and a feeling of ethnic superiority. There are some implied references in the novel to this attitude. For instance, Abboud expresses his opposition to the idea of the superiority of one religion over other religions, with an implicit reference to Judaism: “The worst foolish thing is when a religion wants you to say it’s the only right one. Or the best one” (p. 177). The Abboud family also does not believe in the idea of the “chosen people” or “anybody being ‘chosen’ over anybody else” (p. 178), again with a clear allusion to the Jews as God’s “chosen people”. Actually, the Bible speaks of the land of Israel and there are several passages in the Bible that describe the geographical boundaries of the so-called Promised Land. However, these passages come largely in the form of promises and prophecies rather than in concrete locations on the ground and they vary from one source to another (Berkowitz, 2007).

Additionally, Israelis are presented as avidly trying to preserve a distinct culture and demarcated geographic and political boundaries via the exclusion of other cultures and other nationalities. Historically speaking, the Jews have been following a kind of ethnic isolation called “the ghetto mentality”. As well known, ghetto mentality often refers to the walled quarter in a European city to which Jews (often a minority) were restricted or required to live in isolation from other ethnic groups. In the novel, though the Jewish characters are not members of a minority, they are presented as prone to a sense of segregation/isolation that keeps them apart from other people. For instance, the first time we see Omer, we notice how he is reticent and withdrawn (pp. 150-153), in contrast with Liyana who is shown as open-minded and forthcoming all through the novel.

Another manifestation of borders is the “castle mentality” that the Israelis show in their treatment of their Arab neighbors. Often the Israelis are depicted as being anxious about protecting themselves and safeguarding
their security. They are also shown as being concerned about losing their identity and keen on preserving their
own traditions and special way of life. An instance of this is the tight security measures the Israeli soldiers and
security men adopt in their treatment of the Abboud family members (pp. 34-37). Other instances include the
rigid attitude of Omer’s parents towards the Arabs and the reserved stance of Omer’s mother towards his new
relationship with the Palestinian-American newfound love (p. 242). By adopting this castle mentality, the Israelis
are trying to protect themselves from outside influences that would disrupt their security and hegemony, though
they are all the while neglecting the interests of the other side. Thus, they believe that by establishing these
metaphorical walls, they can keep out the enemy and stay secure.

Looking back at the past, the situation on the ground has undoubtedly changed (for the worse, of course)
after the first appearance of the novel in the late 1990s. Walls, borders, and fences inside and outside Palestinian
territories and Israel itself have grown and are increasingly representing not only physical barriers but also
conceptual and psychological barriers that have been prompting Israeli politicians to press for an all-Jewish state
that would expel all Palestinians living in Israel. These barriers are also strengthening an Israeli exclusionist
mentality in the midst of a postmodern and cultural studies era that opposes marginalization and homogeneity and
promotes equality, openness, and acceptance of the other. Cooper et al. point out that our modern world has been
witnessing a wave of globalization enhanced by a trend towards multiculturalism, plurality and a sense of
understanding and recognizing the other. Yet, they maintain, while singling out the Israeli “Separation Wall”,
that there has been a distinct rise in the culture of borders that promotes cultural, political, national, ethnic, social,
economic, and religious exclusion of the other. In their words:

Physical barriers of the most concrete kind have been enjoying a marked resurrection. Less than two decades after
the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dawning of what Francis Fukuyama so rashly promised was the “end of history,”
walls are again being built. The physical divide being erected between Israel and Palestine is perhaps the best known
example. (Cooper et al., 2007, p. 1)

Indeed, the Israeli “Separation Wall” is a startling example of the perpetuation of the castle mentality that
has characterized some nations during world history including the Israelis.

_Habibi_ is a novel that expounds on the interrelationship between geography and the international relations.
The novel spans over three different geographical locations, namely the U.S.A., Israel, and Palestine. In it,
borders mentally affect the way people think about their national status and shape their view of the “I” and the
“other”. Scholars have shown how geography plays a major role in human societies, shaping one’s identity,
cultural background and lifestyle. As Chang (2010) observes:

Not only for countries but also for individuals, geography determines many aspects of people’s sense of self; for
instance, depending on the place where a person is born or grows up, he or she will have a different cultural identity,
different nationality, and different institutional services for his or her lifetime. (p. 1)

The Abbouds view themselves as Arab-Americans and sometimes find difficulty in determining their actual
identity. For example, Liyana’s father finds it difficult to explain to his Arab folks that he is partly Arab and
partly American and his daughter and son also are not sure about their real identity:

_Sometimes, she heard her father say, “We are Americans,” to his relatives. …

_Americans?_

_Even Poppy who was always an Arab before?_
As young adolescents, the Abboud children become aware of the national and ethnic boundaries surrounding them. Psychologists and sociologists have demonstrated how immigration is not only about changing countries or places but also about changing identities, especially for adolescents. Children of immigrants, especially adolescents in the process of constructing their identity, face conflicting social contexts in which they attempt to incorporate “here” and “there” into a meaningful sense of self. Thus, the identity formation among immigrants, especially adolescents, the age when identity formation takes place for all people, is a continuous process in which both host country and origin country play a significant role in identity formation (Erikson, 1968). In Habibi, characters immigrate and change places and consequently identities.

As in many of her other works, Nye explores the theme of displacement, while simultaneously addressing the attachment to land and to indigenous and Bedouin roots. Undoubtedly, Nye’s biographical background figures prominently in the novel as indeed in all her works. Like the father of Liyana and Rafik, Nye’s father left Palestine after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war for the States and later moved to the Middle East to a town near Jerusalem. Family life and experiences seem to have left an indelible impact on Nye’s writing. Thus, immigration, travel, dispossession, refugee status, geography, and borders affect the characters’ lives in this novel. Family, identity, home, the refugee, and the settler are some of the themes raised in Habibi, all of which are seen against a backdrop of people’s daily lives—ordinary storytelling and traveling.

Political maps have a great power in imperialism; they can be considered as a way in which colonizers exert superiority over the colonized. In Culture and Imperialism (1994), Said describes imperialism as “an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control” (p. 14). Through these borders and maps, the colonizer oppresses, and the colonized is submitted under control. For Said, maps are “weapons of imperialism” which are used in colonial promotion. Nye presents a similar view of maps and borders by showing how borders and walls are intended as a means of separation, discrimination and political and cultural hegemony. However, Nye does not stop at this point. Instead, she goes a step further by countering the powers of political maps and borders with the powers of multiculturalism and diversity through which she tries to show the flimsiness of the borders and boundaries and the uselessness of political maps. Nye underscores the negative role of the current borders that divide Palestine and separate the Palestinians and the Israelis who used to live together before this demarcation was established by the new colonizers or the occupiers.

The idea that the borders drawn between Palestinians and Israelis on the map and on the ground may be imaginary and transient is brought up clearly in the love relationship between the two protagonists of the novel, Liyana (an American-Palestinian) and Omer (an Israeli Jew). Nye seems to suggest that if the politicians draw the border lines on the political maps, this does not mean that they actually divide the people altogether or cut all links between them for ever. By establishing a love relationship between a Palestinian and a Jew, the author wants to argue that people can be connected together despite all barriers. One might imagine that these border lines would divide people, but ironically, they can bring them closer together.

In Nye’s novel, as indeed in many other similar works, the border has an interesting dual meaning as both a barrier and a passage to freedom. In literature, particularly Black American literature, “crossing the border” has
for long been associated with some kind of freedom and a passage to liberation. As such, it is an escape from oppression, restrictions and more often from persecution. Similarly, Liyana’s crossing of the frontier takes both physical and conceptual dimensions. It is both a crossing of the geographical borders (i.e., from East to West Jerusalem) and of moral or psychological borders (when she accepts to develop a romantic relationship with a Jewish boy). Indeed, the narrative is woven around not only violence and hostilities but also on love and friendship between the adversaries. Though the Palestinians and Jews are now divided by maps and borders, the novelist shows that they used to live together in the past and can do the same at the present.

The futility of borders is also apparent when the Abbouds, accompanied by some of their close relatives and Omer, go on a visit to Sitti’s village. Sitti accepts Omer with all her heart. Despite all the deaths, the violence, and the smashing of homes Sitti has seen, when Liyana asks her about the recent peace talks, Sitti answers: “I never lost my peace inside” (p. 247). Later, Sitti tells Omer, “There are hard words waiting in people’s mouths to be spoken. There are walls. You can’t break them. Just find doors in them. See? You already have. Here we are together” (p. 270). Already, on their way to the grandmother’s home, Abboud expressed his surprise at the “concrete Jewish settlement with its enclosures of barbed-wire fences and military tower” (p. 250). He also showed great amazement when he heard Omer talking about Israel proper and the West Bank as two different worlds:

Then Poppy asked Omer, “What do your friends think about the West Bank?”
Khaled looked at him. Omer stared and stared out the window. He said, “They feel—scared. They—don’t know. They never came here. They think it is a different world.”
There was a long silence in which Poppy echoed him, whispering, “Different world?” (p. 251)

All the speakers in the above instances question the ability of borders to divide people. In their views, such borders and barriers only provoke acts of violence between peoples and different nationalities on both sides of the borders.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has been defined as the view that various cultures in any society (rather than one national culture) can co-exist peacefully and merit equal respect and serious consideration in one single country. It also refers to the cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity of any society. Multiculturalism is manifested in customary behaviors, social values, patterns of thinking, and lifestyles. According to Peter Adler (2002), multiculturalism “suggests a human being whose identifications and loyalties transcend the boundaries of nationalism and whose commitments are pinned to a larger vision of the global community”. Adler also argues that though nation, culture and society exert a great influence on all human beings, that human beings cannot hold themselves apart from some form of cultural influence and that there is no person who is culture free, there are people who can be “the product of the interweaving of cultures”. He further elaborates: “Around the planet the streams of the world’s cultures merge together to form new currents of human interaction… each such vignette is a symbol of the mingling and melding of human cultures”.

Adler (2002) further believes that in our modern times, human connections and communication have seriously affected or undermined the traditional concepts of borders: “Accompanying the growth of human communication has been the erosion of barriers that have, throughout history, geographically, linguistically, and
culturally separated people”. Consequently, a new type of person has emerged, someone whose horizons extend significantly beyond his or her own culture and whom Adler calls the multiculturalist (Adler, 2002). A multiculturalist, Adler maintains, is one whose essential identity is inclusive of different life patterns and who has psychologically and socially come to grips with a multiplicity of realities. His/her experience is grounded in the universality of the human condition and the diversity of cultural forms: “The multicultural person is intellectually and emotionally committed to the basic unity of all human beings while at the same time recognizing, legitimizing, accepting, and appreciating the differences that exist between people of different cultures” (Adler, 2002).

An essential part of multiculturalism is identity or multicultural identity, to be more specific. By identity is meant, “all of the beliefs, ideals, and values that help shape and guide a person’s behavior” (Cherry, 2014). There are different types of identity. These types include cultural, ethnic, national, and religious identity, etc.. Cultural identity is the feeling of belonging to a group or culture. An ethnic identity is the identification with a certain ethnicity, usually on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry. A religious identity is the set of beliefs and practices generally held by an individual, involving adherence to codified beliefs and rituals and ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history, and mythology as well as faith and mystic experience (“Identity Formation”, Wikipedia, 2008).

One of the major exponents of identity is the German-born American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1968). Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development comprise eight stages through which a healthily developing human should pass from infancy to late adulthood. Erikson’s belief is that throughout each person’s lifetime, they experience different crises/conflicts. Each of the conflicts arises at a certain point in life and must be successfully resolved for progression to the next of the eight stages. Each identity stage represents a particular configuration of the individual’s progress with regard to identity exploration and commitment to the values, beliefs, and goals that contribute to identity. (“Erikson’s Stages of Psychological Development”, Wikipedia). Thus, “Identity versus Role Confusion” consists of adolescents trying to figure out who they are in order to form a basic identity that they will build on throughout their life. Once an adolescent has accomplished the task of figuring out “who they are”, they are ready to enter the next stage of Erikson’s theory, “Intimacy versus Isolation” where they will form strong friendships and a sense of companionship with others (“Identity Formation”, Wikipedia, 2008). It is these two stages of identity formation that we shall be concerned with in the ensuing discussion; the other six stages as outlined and explained by Erikson are concerned with infancy and adulthood and fall beyond the scope of our investigation of the personal identity formation of the novel’s heroine Liyana who is now about 14-15 years old.

The development of Libyan’s identity during early and middle adolescence almost parallels Erikson’s description of the above two stages, that is “Identity versus Role Confusion” and “Intimacy versus Isolation”. The first crisis (“Identity versus Role Confusion”) represents the struggle to find a balance between developing a unique, individual identity while still being accepted and “fitting in”. The second crisis (“Intimacy versus Isolation”), occurring between late adolescence and early adulthood, represents the struggle to achieve a mutual balance between giving love and support, and receiving love and support. Erikson believed that when youth successfully pass this crisis they become able to form reciprocal relationships with others to achieve common goals such as love and marriage.
What is distinctive about the multicultural person is an abiding commitment to the essential similarities between people everywhere, while paradoxically maintaining an equally strong commitment to differences (Adler, 2002). Despite any possible commitment, the multicultural individual is always ready for modifying his/her identity: “The multicultural person is always in flux, the configuration of loyalties and identifications changing, the overall image of self perpetually being reformulated through experience and contact with the world”. The identity of a multicultural person, Adler asserts, is fluid, more susceptible to change and more open to variation. It is an identity based “not on a ‘belongingness’ which implies either owning or being owned by culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality” (Adler, 2002).

In the course of the novel, we witness Liyana’s growing cultural awareness, her constantly developing understanding and adjustment to different cultures other than her own which is basically American and only partially Arab. Though she sometimes, to use Bennett’s terminology, views her American culture as “central to reality”, she does not seem to be totally “denying” or “minimizing” or “defending” against cultural differences; rather she is simultaneously open to cultural differences and is capable of seeing her culture in the context of other cultures by finally “accepting”, “adapting” and even “integrating” different cultural worldviews into her identity (Bennett, 2004). Eventually, she reaches a stage where she is ready to transcend cultural boundaries and adopt, together with her parents and her brother, a kind of cosmopolitan/universal cultural outlook.

Initially, Liyana is not ready to accept the values of her family, community, and culture without questioning. On the contrary, she tries to explore their value system and to learn more about her Arab cultural heritage, at least to some degree. Liyana’s exploratory process ranges from a simple questioning of why things are the way they are, to experimentation with a different set of values and beliefs, to outright rejection of generally accepted values and beliefs. Liyana is trying to figure out who she is in order to form her basic identity. The first question she keeps asking about her personal identity amounts to this: “Who am I?” or “What can I be?” In this kind of question she is looking for what makes her unique as an individual and different from others. She is concerned with the way she views or defines herself and the network of values and convictions that structure her life. As Oswalt (2014) observes:

Adolescence is a prime time for youth to explore their cultural heritage and identity. They may want to learn about their family’s origins and may ask to be told stories about their ancestors’ history. Likewise, they may question what it means to be part of their culture in contemporary society.

As an embodiment of Nye’s notion of multiculturalism, the novel’s protagonist combines elements from different cultures: American, Arab, Armenian, Indian, etc.. As Liyana explores new possibilities, she forms new beliefs, adopts different values, and makes different choices. These developmental stages cause her to develop a progressively greater commitment to a particular individual identity; but her final identity will be multicultural rather than monocultural. Liyana is moving from an initially confused and undefined individual to a better defined identity and an individual sense of self.

Moving out from the States to Palestine/Israel brings for Liyana serious cultural issues she has to resolve. Such issues include the language she speaks, her dressing, her manners, her social interactions, her beliefs and values and, later on, her relationship with the other sex. Her identity formation includes various components from
different cultures and not just one culture. In Jerusalem, Liyana finds herself in a society that speaks different languages (Arabic, Armenian, Hebrew, and others) and nurtures different cultures. In the American school Liyana goes to, “the students were trilingual, speaking Arabic, Armenian and English” (p. 76), a situation that makes Liyana deeply worried. In her attempt to re-evaluate her understanding of the world and her values system, Liyana swings uneasily back and forth between her Arab and American cultural backgrounds, finding it sometimes difficult to adapt:

The minute Poppy told her to stop combing her hair on the balcony, she toppled on to the American side, thinking. If I were at home on a beach I could run up and down the sand with just a bathing suit on and no one would even notice me, I could wear my short shorts that I didn’t bring and hold a boy’s hand in the street without causing an earthquake, I could comb my wet hair in public for a hundred dumb years. (p. 125)

The second question that Liyana would ask herself is “can I love?” Once she has figured out whom she is, Liyana tries to form a sense of friendship and companionship with others, including Omer, the Jewish boy with whom she falls in love despite her parents’ opposition. According to Erikson, at this stage (“Intimacy versus Isolation”) social development involves a dramatic change in the quantity and quality of social relationships. During her adolescence years Liyana begins to form different types of relationships, and some of these relationships become more deeply involved and more emotionally intimate. Additionally, her social networks greatly expand to include more people, and different types of relationships. This exploratory process can be frustrating for her parents, especially when she challenges the cultural values of the family, or when she directly challenges parental authority. Oswalt explains that during early and middle adolescent years, there is usually more frequent conflict between teens and their parents. Often, this is because they are trying to assert their individuality and are exercising their independence. Furthermore, youth may rebel against their parents’ rules and values as part of their identity development process. Sometimes youth openly defy these rules and values, while at other times they do so in private (Oswalt, 2014).

Sometimes, Liyana has to go a step further by testing the limits and boundaries set by her parents and other authorities. She appears to oppose and resist restrictions of any sort.

While every family, religion, and culture have different rules and expectations about courtship, most youth have at least some interest in romantic relationships and may attempt to form a romantic bond, even if doing so breaks the rules…. Youth in early and middle adolescence will usually begin dating. (Oswalt, 2014)

Thus, we see Liyana testing her family’s allegedly unprejudiced beliefs when she befriends Omer, a Jewish boy, whom she wants to introduce to her father. As Libyan’s newly found lover is Jewish, her parents oppose this friendship (pp. 160-161). However, Liyana does not go to an extreme in her efforts to re-direct the course of her life and even her identity and her parents remain open-minded to her new explorations. Gradually, the Abbouds accept the new situation amidst the various episodes of violence and persecution that show how Arabs and Jews are torn by conflicts that infiltrate every aspect of their lives.

One of the main elements of Erikson’s psychological stage theory is the development of ego identity. Ego identity is the conscious sense of self that we develop through social interaction. According to Erikson, “Our ego identity is constantly changing due to new experiences and information we acquire in our daily interactions with others” (as qtd. in Cherry, 2014). Liyana’s identity is changing and developing and in the same way Liyana is also
developing her social and communication skills. In this adaptation process, she is helped by her mother and her father who, on one occasion tells her: “Cultural differences aren’t learned or understood immediately. Most importantly, you must abide by the guidelines where you are living. This is common sense. It will protect you” (pp. 61-62). So, we find not only parental opposition but also parental support and encouragement at later stages of the love affair’s development. Ultimately, this learning process and social support enable Liyana to create emotional intimacy with her selected love, to find satisfaction within these social and love relationships and to create a strong social web of family, friends, and possibly lifetime companions.

During this cultural and identity exploration, Liyana is concerned about her being a hybrid. Viewing herself in an amusing manner, she exclaims: “I am just a half-half, woman-girl, Arab-American, a mixed breed like those wild characters that ride up on ponies in the cowboy movies Rafik likes to watch. The half-breeds are always villains or rescuers, never anybody normal in between” (p. 20). We are also told that “in Jerusalem she was just a blur going by in the streets. The half-American with the Arab eyes in the navy blue American school uniform” (p. 84). She also refers to her hybrid origin: “I am an American”, she said, “Mostly” (p. 165).

Historically, the notion of hybridity was used with a negative sense (O’Connor, 2013). Hybridized people were seen as living in a state of in-betweenness which would result in discomfort and suffering. O’Connor (2013) adds that

hybridity is a term that has risen to prominence in articulations of social and cultural mix. We talk of hybridity as the fusion of distinct identities, foods, and languages but the result is often fluid and ambiguous. Nevertheless, the term has become a celebrated concept of identity.

Thus, hybridity indicates a mix of different elements which come from different sources and origins: religions, cultures, race, political and cultural identities, etc. In the present times, mix is celebrated as a symbol of mobility whilst the purity championed by scientific racism has become associated with ideas of rigidity and inflexibility (O’Connor, 2013).

Originally used with a negative sense of inferiority, hybridity has now gained a different and positive sense especially in the discourses of identity, multiculturalism, race, postcolonialism, and globalization. Like Bhabha’s concept of mimicry (The Location of Culture, 1994), hybridity implies a dissembling image of having two identities at once. Additionally, it is concerned with the effects of mixture upon identity and culture, and with cultures and their interactions. It implies that traces of other cultures exist in every culture. The rhetoric of hybridity has progressed so that it forms a real challenge to essentialism or the idea that objects have their different and specific identity. Above all, it is basically concerned with multicultural mixture that defies the setting of borders and separation.

Politically, hybridity involves intercultural and international communication taking place amidst differential power. Cultural interaction is presented as resistant to political separation. Bhabha (1994) explores hybridity in the context of the postcolonial novel, celebrating it as the resilience of the subaltern and as the contamination of imperial ideology, aesthetics, and identity, by natives who are striking back at imperial domination. He emphasizes hybridity’s ability to subvert and reappropriate dominant discourses. Bhabha (1986) saw hybridity as a transgressive act that challenges the colonizers’ authority, values and representations and thereby constituting an act of self-empowerment and defiance (Kraidy, 2002). But as Ang (2003) argues, “Hybridity is a concept that
confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them”. This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of harmonious merger and fusion: “Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution” (Ang, 2003, pp. 149-50).

In Habibi, cultural identities are not fixed, but dynamic and poised between different positions; they draw on different cultural traditions and become the product of those complicated cross-overs and cultural mixes which are increasingly common in a globalized world. Indeed, the novel critiques the concept of cultural purity or ethnic absolutism and presents a discourse that goes against racial inequality and racial discord, giving rise to a mixed population and more harmonious society. The novelist is obviously trying to promote cultural hybridity and to show that the boundaries of hybridity are flexible and malleable. As a general rule, hybridity always produces new outcomes. Consequently, we witness a mix of religions, cultures, race, political and cultural identities, etc. and a tension between the local and the global. Although the novelist seems to be presenting her views against the backdrop of what can be called a new democratic and multiculturalist age, we see an alarming insistence on fundamentalist identifications, a conflict between fundamentalist border mentality and liberalist multicultural open-border mentality.

Hybridity or mixed identities has constituted an important field of cultural studies. The use of hybridity in this field is closely linked to post-modern sensibilities which challenge modernist ideas assuming that fixity, territoriality and distinctive languages and ethnicities constitute themselves as separate identities. Instead, the post-modernists argue that borders are fractured and nation-states are becoming more complex and more fragmented, particularly as a result of international migration and cultural globalization. Hybridity is a concept that reverses the effects of imperial culturalism and instead posits the notion of creating mixed cultures. In this novel we witness the creation of commingled cultures from different parent cultures. Arab and Jewish cultures meet and integrate in one way or another through the relationship between Jewish and Arab characters as well as through language and a common desire for peace and reconciliation.

As a hybrid and as a multicultural person, Liyana is living with tension and continuous movement. Adler (2002) explains that to live on the edge of one’s thinking, one’s culture, or one’s ego, is to live with tension and movement:

> It is in truth not standing still, but rather a crossing and return, a repetition of return and crossing, back-and-forth—the aim of which is to create a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.

And so, the multicultural person’s identity is not confined or limited: “The multicultural person maintains indefinite boundaries of the self. … Multicultural people are capable of major shifts in their frame of reference and embody the ability to disavow a permanent character and change in socio-psychological style”. Adler further adds that “multicultural persons undergo shifts in their total psychocultural posture, their religion, personality, behavior, occupation, nationality, outlook, political persuasion, and values may, in part or completely, reformulate in the face of new experience”. Adler (2002) concludes that the multicultural person embodies attributes and characteristics that prepare him or her to serve as a facilitator and catalyst for contacts between cultures. The variations and flexibility of this identity style allows that person to relate to a variety of contexts and environments without being totally encapsulated by or totally alienated from any given culture.
Borders Versus Multiculturalism

To counteract the narrative of closed-border mentality, Nye utilizes the narrative of open-doors multiculturalism to express the effect of a multiculturalist perspective on life and intercommunal relationships. To achieve this objective, she drew upon various strategies including cultural diversity, characters interaction, language similarity, multiethnic history, rejection of all forms of essentialism/fundamentalism, disregard of purity of race or ethnicity, and equality of all religions. As explained earlier, Nye is keen on promoting interaction among different cultures. The novel is replete with references to various cultures including American, Jewish, Arab, Armenian, Hindu cultures, a fact which highlights the theme of multiculturalism and its role in bridging the gap between different races, countries, groups, and individuals. Indeed, Palestine is depicted to have been culturally, linguistically, religiously and ethnically one of the most diverse countries in the world and Palestinian culture was an amalgamation of these diverse cultures. Moreover, Nye celebrates the complex fusion of the Palestinian and American cultures in her Arab-American characters and their intermingling of cultural elements from their own bi-cultural heritage and from other cultures.

Nye also makes her different characters communicate regardless of their racial or ethnic differences or cultural backgrounds and on equal footing. She draws a variety of parallel and interlocking relationships between the Israelis and the Palestinians, most important of which is the love relationship that develops between Liyana, the Palestinian-American girl and Omer, the Jewish boy from Jerusalem. Such relationships are not random. They actually underline the core theme of the novel which is the possibility of friendship and connection between two characters, if not two peoples, who are ideologically, politically and religiously different. Moreover, Nye uses language as a common ground that can bring characters or people closer together and in this way cross the language barrier and become more able to interact and intercommunicate. This is clearly seen in the use of such words as “Habibi” and “Omer” which serve as a useful indicator of the hybridity of culture or linguistic hybridity. This phenomenon shows that both cultures (Arabic and Jewish) are actually interlinked or have one common origin. Furthermore, the novel shows a kind of welcoming strangers into one’s home when Liyana’s Palestinian family hosts Omer, her Jewish friend, in their home, though not without some accompanying tensions and the cumbersome impediments of Israeli fences and barricades along the way (pp. 252-253).

Border-multiculturalism dialectic is also noticeable in Nye’s drawing upon a discourse that rejects essentialism, purity of race and culture superiority. All members of the Abboud family see themselves as partly American and partly Arab (pp. 124-125) and have a kind of cosmopolitan outlook that would oppose fundamentalism and tolerate other cultures: “Any kind of fundamentalism gave Poppy the shivers…. ‘Fundamentalists talk louder than liberals,’ he said. That’s too bad. Maybe we moderate people should raise our voices” (p. 179). Additionally, Nye questions strict adherence to orthodox religious doctrines and critiques the traditional dogma of the Jews being “God’s chosen people”. As an embodiment of Nye’s own views, the Abbous “did not believe in… anybody being ‘chosen’ over anybody else” (p. 178). Abboud also wonders: “Does it make sense… that God would choose some people and leave the others out? If only Christians and Jews are right, what about most of Asia and the Middle East?” (p. 179).

As part of her pro-multiculturalism narrative, Nye encourages religious freedom, the right to choose or change one’s own religion or no religion without any outside influence. Nye presents all religions on an equitable basis regarding their merits or demerits: “Poppy [i.e., Abboud] said every religion contained some shining ideas and
plenty of foolishness, too” (p. 177). Abboud also maintains that “the worst foolish thing is when a religion wants you to say it’s the only right one. Or the best one” (p. 177). Abboud’s wife has a liberal view of religion: “Liyana’s mother believed a whole lot in karma, the Hindu belief that what someone does in this world will come back to him or her” (p. 176). Liyana herself “liked the eightfold path in Buddhism, and the idea of the bodhisattva, the soul who does good for others without any thought for himself or herself” (p. 176). The whole family seems to be open-minded on the question of religious belief and affiliation: “The Abbouds had never belonged to a church since Liyana was born, but it might have made things easier. Liyana’s mother said they were a spiritual family, they just weren’t a traditionally religious one” (p. 175). This kind of attitude is almost paralleled by a similar one on the part of Omer, the principal Jewish character in the novel. Thus, we are told that Omer “doesn’t seem orthodox—anything. He seems universal” (p. 240). In this way, we find striking similarities between the religious views of the principal Jewish and Arab characters, an intriguing situation that is utilized by the author to promote her ideas on multiculturalism and to bring the conflicting parties closer together.

To enhance her border-versus-multiculturalism narrative, Nye explores the history of Palestine and its inhabitants as well as its colonization legacy. As shown in the novel, the population of Palestine had always been a mixture of different nationalities and diverse ethnic and religious groupings. This is clearly expressed in Liyana’s comprehensive report to her history teacher (pp. 28-32) in which the Arab-Israeli conflict is summed up in three periods: (1) the period of peaceful coexistence among all inhabitants of Jerusalem including Arabs and Jews, (2) the period of war and conflict following the end of the British mandate, and (3) the more recent period of peace negotiations after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. In the past, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Muslims, and Christians used to constitute a sort of cultural mosaic in which all people from different ethnic origins could easily get together. Before the Israeli occupation, Palestine had become an example of multiculturalism in terms of its variety of religions, plurality of traditions and colorful ethnicity. Its largest ethnic minorities, Greeks and Jews, enjoyed peaceful coexistence with their Arab compatriots without any social troubles. As Liyana reports: “Everybody was mixed together. My father says nobody talked or thought much about being Arabs or Jews or anything” (p. 28).

That situation no longer exists under the Israeli state which is keen on enforcing a culturally homogeneous society that has one culture, one descent, one religion, and one language. Though cultural diversity had been the predominant policy in Palestine prior to the Israeli occupation, the Israeli policy is not one of multiculturalism but of monoculturalism and an opposition to cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. Current Israeli policy is keen on establishing a one-race population even though this goes against the present situation of a multiethnic country. Now, religion, instead of bringing people together as it used to do in the past, plays an important role in fracturing the local population, and ethnicity is a means for separation, segregation, and racial discrimination.

This negative attitude/policy occurs not only on the public and official levels but also on the level of individuals. For instance, Omer’s mother is totally against his acquaintance with the Arab-American girl, Liyana: “His mother didn’t want him to go the village with Liyana, ever” (p. 242). In another incident we are shown how an Israeli citizen blames Liyana for dealing with an Arab and urges her to go to Jewish stores instead: “‘Why you bother with this animal?’ he said, pointing to Bassam. ‘Be careful. Don’t trust animals. Go to better stores in our part of town,’ so she knew he thought she was Jewish” (p. 95). Thus, we notice an inclination for cultural isolation on the part of the majority of the Jewish characters in contrast with the principal Palestinian characters.
who support multicultural diversity and a pluralist society.

Through her use of the multiculturalism narrative as a means of countering the border-mentality narrative, Nye is keen on promoting a sense of cultural diversity. Her aim is to establish a society that is rich in its tapestry of human life and to promote the desire amongst the people to express their identity in the manner they see fit so that there can be equal respect for the various cultures in that society and an acceptance of various ethnic, cultural, political and religious groupings. Cultural pluralism is viewed as a way of building a better and an egalitarian society. Compared with borders rhetoric, multiculturalism rhetoric is seen as a fairer system that would allow people to truly express who they are within a pluralistic society. It is also a useful means to combat racism, to protect minority communities of all types, and to undo policies that prevent certain communities from having full access to the opportunities for freedom and equality. Consequently, cultural norms and social values would not come from one dominant culture but through an open dialogue between different cultures.

This kind of attitude is clearly reflected in most of Nye’s writings and in many of the interviews with her such as those conducted by Joy Castro (2002), Meg Kavanagh (2002), and Bill Moyers (2012) where she reveals her interest in globalization, multiculturalism and peaceful coexistence and where she seems to be promoting a kind of global consciousness and cultural diversity to offset the argument of closed-border mentality and to promote the discourse of open-doors outlook. In Habibi in particular Nye challenges the notion of closed borders and embraces the discourse of multiculturalism.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationship between multiculturalism rhetoric and borders narrative as manifested in Nye’s novel Habibi. It shows how both borders and multiculturalism play an important role in shaping human relationships in this novel. Borders imply a variety of barriers: cultural, ethnic, psychological, and political. Geographical borders play a significant role in enforcing the differences and the gaps between Palestinians and Israelis and the cultural, ethnic, and political borders form a snag in the love story between the novel’s two protagonists. In the end, all such borders are proven to be mere shadows because they divide two lovers who share similar feelings and sentiments and two peoples who used to live in harmony with one another.

Palestinian characters, as a minority group, are portrayed as being more open-minded to other cultures while the Jewish characters, as a majority group, are presented as being less inclined to accept other cultures. Whereas the Palestinians are generally interested in a life without barriers and boundaries, Israelis are keen on preserving a state of isolation and segregation. To counteract the argument of border mentality, Nye posits the rhetoric of multiculturalism. Cultural multiplicity would give all citizens the right to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion, their right to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of the barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, or place of birth. Nye’s position is that borders and geographical demarcations are arbitrary and create divisions, animosities, and hatred between people and nations whereas multiculturalism engenders feelings of reconciliation, friendship, peace, and understanding. Nye seems to be looking for a country whose inhabitants can live together though they belong to different cultures and have different history, different cultures, and different languages, which are actually similar in many ways. Though the writer is aware of such divisions, she demonstrates that such divisions and barriers can be overcome after all.
References


Teaching Philosophy Embedded in *The Sound of Music* *

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Maria is the heroine in the movie *The Sound of Music*. She leaves an Austrian convent to be a governess at Captain Georg von Trapp’s home. With her kindness, honesty, and teaching wisdom, she wins the seven children’s trust, respect, and love. This paper analyzes the teaching philosophy embedded in this film, such as how to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses to develop their potentials, how to encourage students to meet new challenges, how to improve students’ ability to resist frustration, how to understand students and build a harmonious relationship with them, and how to teach students with effective methods, etc., teachers can benefit a lot from this aesthetically significant film from the perspective of pedagogy and psychology.

*Keywords: The Sound of Music, Maria, teaching philosophy, inspiration*

**Introduction**

*The Sound of Music* directed and produced by Robert Wise and starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer in 1965 is one of the favorite musical movies in the world. The film is derived from the Broadway musical play with the same title *The Sound of Music*. Based on the book *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers* published in 1945, the film is about a young woman named Maria, who leaves an Austrian convent to become a favorite governess to the seven children of a naval officer widower, Captain Georg von Trapp, and at last, they fall in love with each other and get married. The film won five Academy Awards including “Best Picture” and “Best Director”. It displaced the popular film *Gone with the Wind* as the highest-grossing one of all-time.

At the end of the 1980s, the author had a chance to enjoy *The Sound of Music* for the first time. As a result, it impressed and moved her deeply with its humane characters, melodic and tuneful music as well as its stunningly beautiful scenery. It is really an aural as well as a visual delight. What is more, the successful governess, Maria, whose teaching philosophy, special innovation in teaching gives her inspirations about how to be a good teacher. This is the reason why the author recommends the students (who major in English) having the opportunity to be English teachers to see the movie for many years. It is a coincidence that recently the author read a report saying, in a teacher development program in China, *The Sound of Music* was applied as one of the training contents in teachers’ ethic devotion. In 2001, the United States Library of Congress selected the film for preservation in the National Film Registry as it was deemed “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant”. A film exerts such a profound influence on people from different countries at different times. This paper focuses on the inspirations

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teachers can draw from the film and apply them for reference in practical teaching.

To Find the Potentials of Students

In the film, Maria is fond of music, nature, and life. She cannot help dancing and singing in the fields, “For a thousand years, the hills fill my heart. With the sound of music, my heart wants to sing every song it hears.” In her eyes, there is happiness everywhere. She often loses herself in music, wandering in her happiness. In the beauty of the wild nature, she finds the most comfortable shelter for her soul in. While as a nun in an abbey, she is not approved by the other sisters. They think, “She (Maria) is not an asset to the abbey.”

Individuals differ in the strength of intelligences. In 1993, Gardner developed the theory of multiple intelligences in *Multiple Intelligences*, which has emerged from cognitive research. Gardner made the following categories: (1) Linguistic intelligence, (2) Logical-mathematical intelligence, (3) Body kinesthetic, (4) Spatial intelligence, (5) Musical intelligence, (6) Intrapersonal intelligence, (7) Interpersonal intelligence, and (8) Naturalist intelligence. Gardner (1993) believes that every person has a relatively independent of the eight kinds of intelligence, but each has its own unique understanding of intellectual development process and system of signs.

Maria is active and energetic, full of the power of character, she is not suitable for strict disciplines in the abbey. The reverend mother in the abbey uses some metaphors to describe her personality, “how do you catch a cloud and pin it down? How do you keep a wave upon the sand? How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?” Maria is articulate with a variety of interests, in the mother’s perspective, she is an ideal candidate to be a governess with her own strong points. The reverend mother is wise enough in recognizing Maria’s potentials to assign her to be the children’s governess. It is Maria’s power of character and her positive attitude to life that contribute to her new career—a governess of the seven children. Maria becomes a successful teacher, not beyond the reverend mother’s expectation. As *Multiple Intelligences* reveals, teachers should understand that every student is unique with their own potentials, trying to analyze and understand their strengths and weaknesses. In this way, teachers can develop students’ recognition, affection, and ability respectively with appropriate methods and give them advice or guide in career planning in the future.

To Encourage Yourself to Meet New Challenges

Do you still remember the time when you stand on the teaching platform as a teacher? Maybe at the very beginning, you had a haze of fear, nervousness, and confusion. Maria also shows her upset when she was assigned to be the governess of the Captain’s seven children. She does not know what her future will be. Can she be accepted by the children? “Why am I so scared?” She tries to maintain her optimism, “I must stop these doubts all these worries. I’m seeking the courage I lack, the courage to serve them with reliance.” She encourages herself to “face my mistakes without defiance, show them I’m worthy”. In fact, she does psyche herself up to meet the challenge to be a governess of seven children: “I have confidence they’ll put me to the test. I will impress them I will be firm but kind.”

Maria uses the positive words above to enhance her self-confidence. If you are nervous or upset when meeting any challenges, remember to learn from Maria: Encourage yourself with such positive words. Rakesh K. Mittal ever said, with a positive mindset every problem is a new challenge and an opportunity. The power of
positive words will help you to attain courage and happiness as it is full of practical wisdom drawn from ordinary daily episodes. It will inspire you to develop a positive outlook towards life and society. These positive words would give you some unexpected benefits, gradually you will be more confident, and you will have a more positive attitude to life.

To Understand the Naughty Students

There were ever 12 governesses before Maria came to Captain Georg von Trapp’s home. They came and left, no one ever stayed here long because the children are pretty naughty. Maria also psyches herself up for the children’s naughty behavior,

Let them bring on all their problems, I’ll do better than my best. Everything will turn out fine, I have confidence the world will all be mine, they’ll have to agree I have confidence in me, I have confidence the world can all be mine.

The seven children of Captain Georg von Trapp are defensive to Maria when she comes to be a new governess. Just read their dialogues when they first meet each other:

Liesl: I’m Liesl. I’m 16 years old, and I don’t need a governess.
Maria: I’m glad you told me, Liesl. We’ll just be good friends.
Maria: Really? Who told you that, Friedrich?
Friedrich: Fraulein Josephine. Four governesses ago.
Brigitta: I’m Brigitta. And I think your dress is the ugliest one I ever saw.
Maria: Congratulations!
Kurt: What’s incorrigible?
Maria: I think it means you want to be treated like a boy…

The children’s innocence and naughtiness as well as Maria’s wisdom in education can be revealed preliminarily in their dialogues. Facing Lisa and Gita’s direct challenge, she is not embarrassed or irritated, just saying “I’m glad you told me, we can be friends”. Kurt’s “incorrigible” is also interpreted as “you want to be treated like a boy”, a very positive signification with a teacher’s good intention. These words have positive implications and expectation in children’s growth and development, which is also beneficial to promote their student-teacher relationship.

After they meet each other, the seven children use various kinds of tricks to make fun with her: putting a toad in her pocket secretly when she goes upstairs, making her so scared; putting a pine cone in her chair before dinner, when she sits down, she cannot help giving a painful scream. She is so embarrassed in front of all the family members including the captain.

Maria knows it is children’s nature to be fond of playing tricks. What is more, the children lost their mother when they were young and their father is so strict with them that they seldom have a chance to express their inner feelings. The former governesses were often caustic and mocking at them. Facing with the children’s practical jokes, Maria shows her understanding, patience, and great tolerance. She tells nothing to their father, the captain. At the dinner table, she just says humorously, “I’d like to thank you all for the precious gift you left in my pocket today.” When the captain asks what gift it is, she just says, “It’s a secret between the children and me.” She also says frankly,
Knowing how nervous I must have been, a stranger in a new household… Knowing how important it was for me to feel accepted. It was so kind and thoughtful of you to make my first moments here so warm and happy and pleasant…

Here Maria shows her great wisdom in dealing with children. It is her kindness and wisdom that help her to resolve the children’s prank and her embarrassing situation. The children perceive Maria’s kindness and sincerity; they are so moved and touched. Maria’s positive personality helps her win the trust, respect, and love of the children. Soon they set up a harmonious teacher-student relationship, which is essential in effective teaching. There is an old saying, “pupils don’t learn anything from people they don’t like.” Both teachers and students can benefit a lot from a harmonious relationship between them.

To Respect Students Who Have Puppy Love

The eldest daughter Liesl, 16-year-old, fell in love with the young postman named Rolfé. One day, they open their hearts and speak lovers’ prattle until midnight regardless of the rain. Liesl ignores the time to go home. As a result, she cannot get into the house because it is locked. Fearing that her father will punish her, she just climbs the walls to enter it. Maria does not blame her, nor does she let others know. Instead, she invites her to her room to have a talk and gives her dry clothes to change so that she will not be noticed by others. Liesl is so moved that she changes her attitude to Maria, “I ever told you I didn’t need a governess, but, maybe, I do.”

Maria and Liesl become good friends and get along well with each other and fit in beautifully. After Liesl is disappointed in love, she comforts her and tries to enlighten her. Under the influence of Maria, Liesl becomes a little assistant, she opens her heart, sharing her secrets and confusion in her mind to Maria. The other children are not lonely any longer; they also share their feelings with Maria without any restraints. They have increasing love to Maria and their family.

Many students in China have experienced puppy love, which interfere with their learning because some of them cannot balance their love and learning. Teachers should respect and understand their affection, because it is inevitable to produce such feelings to the opposite sex at their age. Teachers can advise them to read some famous people’s biographies to help them find role models in their growth and learn to treat their emotion and learning wisely. Teachers’ understanding and solicitude are helpful to establish a good relationship with students. They are more willing to open their inner world and communicate better with teachers, who can provide students immediate help once there are any problems. In this way, students can benefit a lot from teachers’ guidance and advice to treat puppy love more wisely.

To Improve Students’ Ability to Resist Frustration in Life

Maria’s parents died when she was only two years old, but she did not wallow in self-pity. Instead, she is optimistic with a bright and cheerful personality, showing great passion to nature and music. Twists and turns are a part of life and setbacks often happen. Life is full of ups and downs. When students meet with setbacks and frustrations, how to motivate and comfort them? Maria also sets a good role model.

At a lightening night with rumbling of thunder and flashes, the children are so scared, and they all run to Maria’s room. Maria encourages them, “You’re not frightened of a storm.” When the children asked, “Why does it do that?” Maria answers them in a very humorous and vivid way, “The lightning talks to the thunder, and the thunder answers.” Lightning and thunder are compared to a talk between them, what a miraculous analogy!
Whenever I’m feeling unhappy, I just try to think of nice things. Daffodils, green meadows, skies full of stars, raindrops on roses and whiskers on kettens, bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens… wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings… silver white winters that melt into springs, these are a few of my favorite things.

“When the dog barks, when the bees bite, I simply remember my favorite things and then I don’t feel so bad.” The children dance and sing together with Maria, not frightening of the thunderstorm any longer. They know the fact that the unpleasant things are inevitable to meet with in life. At that time, they just think of their favorites, the unpleasant feelings such as anxiety or fear will disappear.

In China, Meng Zi (a thinker and educator in Warring States Period, about in 372-289 BC) ever said,

When Heaven is about to place a great responsibility on a great man, it always first frustrates his spirit and will, exhausts his muscles and bones, exposes him to starvation and poverty, harasses him by troubles and setbacks so as to stimulate his spirit, toughen his nature and enhance his abilities.

Setbacks and frustrations are indispensable in life. If teachers help students to realize the significant role that setbacks or difficulties play in the process of their grown and development, they will be more optimistic and more prepared when they meet with difficulties or troubles.

To Teach Students Effectively

At the very beginning of the film, when the audiences follow Maria to Captain Georg von Trapp’s home, what they find is a family with strict discipline. The captain uses a whistle to summon his children. He also issues orders to his children like to his soldiers, and dresses them in sailor-suit uniforms. Under the rigid rules, the nature of the children is limited, they have no songs, no laughers, and they are only fond of playing tricks on people. Maria discovers it is not suitable to children at all.

Maria respects children’s interests and hobbies. Although initially hostile toward her, the children become friendly to her. Quickly, she obtains the trust of the children. She teaches effectively the children in accordance with their nature and different personality.

The first lesson is carried out in the beautiful nature, Maria teaches them through lively activities. Education cannot thrive without enjoyment. Maria teaches the children to sing, “When you read, you begin with A-B-C; when you sing, you begin with Do-Re-Me.” Do-Re-Me is the musical notes one must learn to sing songs. In order to help them to understand and memorize the notes, she compares the abstract musical notes and the familiar lovely things with the method of harmonic tone:

Doe (do) a deer, a female deer,
Ray (re) a drop of golden sun,
Me (mi) a name I call myself,
Far (fa) a long long way to run,
Sew (so) a needle pulling thread,
La a note follow sew,
Tea (ti) a drink jam with bread…

Maria combines education with pleasure with the heuristic education, arousing children’s curiosity and interests, making difficult things simple and changing the abstract to the concrete. Gradually, the children have the same infectious enthusiasm to join the song. They are learning and singing happily, spreading the happiness
and singing amongst all the way in the field, and in the valley. Music draws the distance closer between Maria and the students, the children become increasing cute and sensible, and their hospitality to Maria disappears completely.

**Conclusion**

An old proverb ever says, it is love that makes the world go round. Maria uses her kindness, honesty, tolerance, and wisdom to teach the children effectively, resolving children’s pranks and solving the embarrassment humorously, which reflects her ethic devotion, professional qualities, and personal styles in education. Consequently, Maria wins the children’s trust, respect, and love. In addition, Maria also sets a role model in the perspective of pedagogy and psychology, enlightening teachers to understand students and create a harmonious relationship with them, to arouse their curiosity and interest to knowledge, to encourage them to meet new challenges, to improve their competences respectively and teach more effectively.

**References**


ZENG Xu-bai and the Journal *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*

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The journal *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness* was the main field where ZENG Xu-bai published his literature works; in response to the miscellaneous “revolutionary literature” at that time, he put forward the idea that literature should be a combination of unity and artistry, and emphasized self-expression of literature on the basis of popularization of literature. With these literature views, his works also had shown his pursuit for the specialty and artistry of literature, as well as a transition from technique-oriented writing to a balance of emotion expression and technique usage. Anyway, during his translation of French literature and creative practice, the rich literature nutrition he received led to his unclear and complex thoughts which he neutralized with carefulness, and hence his unique literature views.

*Keywords:* ZENG Xu-bai; *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*; literary popularization

Introduction

From the 1920s to 1930s, ZENG Xu-bai has made great contribution to the translation of French literature by publishing a large number of translating literature and creative works on the journal *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness* which he initiated together with his father ZENG Pu. During his translation and creative practice, the rich literature nutrition he received led to his unclear and complex thoughts which he neutralized with carefulness, and hence his unique literature views.

Unity and Specialty of Literature

In 1927, ZENG Xu-bai stepped into the literary circle with the journal *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness* run by his father ZENG Pu. In fact, the journal was more likely to be a spiritual comfort after political setbacks between the father and son. During the four years of running *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*, ZENG Xu-bai’s contribution is unfathomable and at the same time he improved his own artistry greatly. Anyway, it was through *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness* that ZENG Xu-bai criticized those notorious phenomena in the literary circle of that time and expressed his own creative viewpoints.

At that time, the National Revolution was developing rashly, a large number of “revolutionary literature” became the main trend of literature. With the aid of politics, literature became a port for emotional release; “the revolutionary wave which influences people’s life and mind is turbulent, and everyone has his or her own distress, thus they shout or jump, use artistry by any means to let out the flame in their bottom mind” (ZENG, 1928b, p. 1). In a word, “revolutionary literature” at that time was brimming with naive catchwords and slogans as well as rough depression and indignation. Meanwhile, ZENG Xu-bai (1928b), a man with political ideology, expressed

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his understanding about this naive behavior of “revolutionary literatures”:

We all know that it is not the right path for literature. But we sympathetically regard it as an inevitable process of it. Their works are rough, and their path is leading to nowhere, but it is an incubation time that we cannot avoid. Who can say that roughness would not bring out purity and nowhere would not lead to somewhere? We needn’t be pessimist nor fight against it, whereas we should be calm and find a new path. It is a waste of time to shout among the crowd or cry out alone beside the road. (pp. 1-2)

To ZENG Xu-bai, the rough revolutionary literature is a sign that literature is going off the track, which is inevitable during the development process of literature; following the trend aimlessly or fighting against it fiercely are all useless, and the only thing we can do is to find a proper way to go back to the right path according to the deficiency of “revolutionary literature”.

With understanding and sympathy in his mind, he analyzed the deficiency of “revolutionary literature” in depth. Firstly, he considered that the biggest problem for “revolutionary literature” was the mighty attitude it held towards other voices, which suppressed the diverse development of literature. With its clear political purpose and the need for usurping the power of artistry, “revolutionary literature” had radical color from the very start. Then because of different standpoints and viewpoints, vehement argument was sweeping throughout the literary circle; people intended to exchange their views with the help of the argument, but at last it became arguments about personal feelings or even abuses:

Their pure white gown of artistry have been tainted with the color of politics. Thus fighting and abusing happened, hatred arose; suppression is carried out first, and then forbiddance. It may express some young men’s thoughts, but in fact, they are out of the literary circle and became the victims of political whirlpool. (ZENG, 1928c, p. 4)

In ZENG Xu-bai’s opinion, this tough combination with politics and crude way of conversing have already let go of the individualism of literature, which made it the tool for politics. Aiming at this phenomenon, he wrote an article “A Letter for New Literary and Art Workers in Our Country”. As for the purpose of the letter, he said:

My letter, actually, is a fighting persuasion, since they are quarreling and squabbling about trivial things like village women,” and “we have no need to divide literature into different schools, for whatever the purpose of the writer, what banner he took, the value of his successful works will be appreciated. (ZENG, 1928c, p. 1)

Secondly, ZENG Xu-bai held that “revolutionary literature” paid much attention to political color which caused its deficiency in artistry, and literature got into a dilemma of invariableness. He clearly expressed his dissatisfaction:

Until now, I know nothing about revolutionary literature. I’ve read novels by famous writers and many very short stories which cannot read as a whole. Those works have no requirements for emotion, art, or any elements of literature; to make a revolutionary literature stir, the only thing you need to do is adding words like yell, kill, the common people, and the workers into your work. Whether it is revolutionary literature? Is there any possibility to establish a revolutionary literature school? You must know better than me. (ZENG, 1928c, p. 10)

According to ZENG Xu-bai, rough “revolutionary literature” broke away from the aestheticism of literature, and inevitably led to the decline of its artistry.

Directing towards the monopoly and deficiency of artistry of “revolutionary literature”, ZENG Xu-bai considered that literature has no class division and put forward a new path for literary circle. In the essay “A New Path for Artistry: After Reading Mao Dun’s ‘From Guling to Dongjing’”, he stated his view systematically. He
thought that Mao Dun’s viewpoint of “petty-bourgeois literature” is a powerful refute to the monopoly of “revolutionary literature”, and at the same time, he thought it “made the same mistake as the revolutionary writers” (ZENG, 1928c, p. 3), for using class division to guide literary creation and criticism is an exclusive literature view in essence. He also rebutted the viewpoint “class literature”, denied the rupture of literature made by class division, and emphasized the diversity and unity of artistry. To sum up, artistry is “a whole, without any sense of time or class; no matter it’s for life or art, it is inseparable; people can never cut it into meaningless fragments to fit for a period or a group of people” (ZENG, 1928c, p. 4). The presentation of artistry is

both in part and whole: Artistry itself is a whole, the presenter, for his limit of strength, might as well present the whole as a part according to his range, but the presentation of the each part intricates, exchanges, and glows, and each showed its specialty, thus a splendid whole is formed. (ZENG, 1928c, p. 4)

Anyway, with a concern for the unity of literature, proletarian literature and petty-bourgeois literature “have their reasons to exist”, and they have infinite hope, “if only the writers can represent this partial brightness”, at the same time, however, it is “a severe mistake to say that it is the only trend of artistry or the only path for all writers” (ZENG, 1928c, p. 6). It is the co-existence of various literatures that forms the unity of artistry and shows the society as a whole.

While making efforts to break the class differences of literature and emphasizing the unity of literature, ZENG Xu-bai also suggested that literature cannot be presented in just one way but should show its specialties. For a long time, the ideology requirements of “revolutionary literature” made writers ignore their self-expression, which led to the loss of sincerity of literature. To change the situation, ZENG Xu-bai thought that the writers should exert their specialties. To him, “self” is the most important:

No matter what school of literature, it is the expression of “self”; the so-called objectivity and subjectivity is a matter of the distinctiveness of self-color. The main ideology of “self” is the resource of work, everything except world and “self” can only be presented based on the ideology of “self” in every writer’s work, besides, the secret of a noble work that surpassing other works is that it can enlighten the dull reality by a transformation in the divine soul. Thus, losing “self”, artistry would have no way to go. (ZENG, 1928b, p. 11)

The collection of the specialties of “self” creates the diversity of literature, thus, in order to highlight the richness of literature, ZENG Xu-bai (1928b) claimed that “artistry has no common path and every writer has his own way to go” (p. 12). Indeed, ZENG Xu-bai’s dialectical understanding about the unity and specialty of literature was a powerful refute to widespread “revolutionary literature” at that time.

**Popularization and Non-utilitarianism of Literature**

Besides his pertinent criticism of “revolutionary literature”, ZENG Xu-bai bettered his writing skills by incessant imitation and then creation. He translated foreign literary works in large numbers so as to get much nutrition from these works; meanwhile he inevitably confronted with contradiction and complexity in this process of digestion and study. Seen from his works and criticisms in *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*, ZENG Xu-bai held that literature is for the people and emphasized writers’ enlightenment function in the popularization of literature, although he did not approve of rough “revolutionary literature”. Meanwhile, he absorbed the concept of aestheticism that literature is non-utilitarian and self-expressing, and inclined to belles-lettres because “popularization of literature does not mean to cater to the bad interests of the common people but to improve their
interests” (DAI, 1928, p. 2). This contradiction and complexity has close relationship to his life experience and creation process.

ZENG Xu-bai was born in a family of scholars and good manners and traditional culture influenced him deeply. Thus, his writing is filled with the spirit of Confucian doctrine which have a long history in Chinese literature. According to his occupation choice, he had a positive attitude of getting into the society; he worked as a newsman and then a publisher, which showed his participation spirit, and before the closedown of *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*, he came back to the press circle, which suggested his enthusiasm to social politics. It was for this enthusiasm that he always looked into the reality while producing his works. In the same time, he read a large number of French literature works and published many translation works with aesthetic flavor in *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*, which deeply affected him. Through a thorough research about the translation of French literature, ZENG Xu-bai realized the “poverty” and “weakness” of new artistry:

“Weakness” is the root of “poverty,” therefore, we should come closer to find the reason of the “weakness.” I dare to say that it is because of the indifference between writers and readers that they live in their own world and show no sympathy to each other’s life. (ZENG, 1928a, p. 5)

He thought that artistry should be social and popular: “Art is the realization of emotion by various forms; we need more social people who care about art to make it thrive. Thus, art depends on the caring heart from society” (ZENG, 1929, p. 2). To ZENG Xu-bai, the gap between readers and writers hindered art from popularization and the writers should change their attitudes to remove this gap:

The mission for a writer is not to lock himself up in the crystal palace of artistry to sing about beauty or love and entertain himself; he should be a prophet and a guide for the people, and direct them to a bright road; to be a prophet and a guide, he should have a clear understanding about the nature of people. (ZENG, 1927, p. 2)

He also published many folk songs on *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness* to affirm the artistry of folk literature, and appealed writers to learn it by heart. It is clear that ZENG Xu-bai firstly thought that a writer should play the role as an initiator, provide positive and advance ideologies to common people, and try to be a guide of common people’s literature.

Anyway, under all these circumstances, his works showed some contradictory and complicated viewpoints about literature. On one hand, ZENG Xu-bai emphasized literature was for the common people, but on the other hand, he was unwilling to yield to common people’s taste and led artistry to vulgarity; he insisted on the purity of literature instead. He advocated the non-utilitarianism of literature:

Artistry is not a tool, it come into being from the revelation of the brightness of nature, it has no prejudice for any individual; it is a light that never burn out, which can light up all the periods from ancient to modern and all entity’s fiber organization in the universe; put it straight, it is the brightness that has no limitation of time and space. If we try to regulate the purpose of artistry, we must misunderstand it, no, we just insult artistry. (ZENG, 1928b, p. 4)

In fact, the style of *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness* he ran is belletrism-oriented and its focus is to represent the richness of life; the works in it mostly show common people’s life, and in ZENG Xu-bai’s own work, he depicted ordinary citizens, told their life stories, and revealed the true color of life. With artistic creation method and description, he kept himself from pandering to vulgarity. Thus, ZENG Xu-bai endeavored to nurture common people by depicting ordinary citizens’ life in his works.
At last, the most important point to notice is that ZENG Xu-bai thought that literature was for the people, but on the other hand, he also thought that literature should express “self”; “literature works are representation of writer’s mental organization” (XU, 1929, pp. 5-6). Therefore, to ZENG Xu-bai, there exists some discordance between the people and self; it is a hard task for the writers to insist on his self-expression and at the same time guide the people with his aesthetic taste. It is clear that ZENG Xu-bai’s efforts to balance elegance and vulgarity show his elite color. From ZENG Xu-bai’s literary concepts of elegance and vulgarity, many of his thoughts have some contradictions: As an intellectual he hoped to create elegant literature, but when he realized that artistry became irrelevant to common people, he hoped to find a proper way to let the elegant literature step into common people’s life. No satisfying solution would be found and the only thing ZENG Xu-bai could do is make compromise on the basis of upgrading people’s understanding.

**Conclusion**

In a word, ZENG Xu-bai’s complexity came from various reasons: For one thing, the social reality at that time left no much room for self-improvement in one’s study, and for another, ZENG Xu-bai has his own social consciousness, even though his belles-lettres ideal has been crushed by reality. Thus his contradiction can be interpreted as a breakthrough at that time.

**References**
