“We call upon our youth to be aware of their responsibility for building our country. They must roll up their sleeves with the utmost energy to contribute positively towards our comprehensive development.”

18/11/1993
From the Dean

Welcome to the third volume of Oman Journal of ELT!

While it is true that information comes in many forms, I always believe that journals like this not only provide the information that one needs, but also provoke deeper thinking that empowers you as a reader. This journal presents a wealth of verified knowledge from the efforts of hardworking academic writers, researchers and contributors. Reading through these pages will let you view topics from many educated perspectives, hence helping you formulate your own conclusion. What better way to empower yourself! Read on.

Dr. Azzah Al-Maskari
Finally, we present to you the third volume of OJELT. One feature that distinguishes this issue from other issues is its wide-ranging topics and contributions from senior Omani research students from Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat. Such contributions not only enhance the quality of budding Omani researchers but also increase the possibility of bringing out various issues in ELT, education, and literature. OJELT’s efforts to encourage research among Omani students are in alignment with the national mission of promoting research among the students in universities and colleges in Oman.

This volume throws light on various issues related to ELT and the relevance of using sociocultural theory, Arabic (L2), and multilingualism in EFL/ESL contexts in Oman. In addition, it also examines the varieties and complexities of English as a global language and the Perceptions of Korean students in Manila on non-native speaking teachers. The paper “Impact of blogging among SQU students” examines the effect of blogging on students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills. Other four papers on literature analyze poems through painting and essay, representation of slavery, earlier models of literary representation of space, and the status of children’s literature in Oman respectively. We would like to thank all the contributors and ICT administration for their exceptional support in making this volume possible. Also, we take this opportunity to request you all to contribute for the next issue of OJELT.
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(vi)
The Sociocultural Theory in Second Language Learning

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Abstract

This brief introduction to the Sociocultural Theory in language learning presents the main tenets of the theory as well as their relevance to the task of second language learning. Unlike other theories of language learning, this theory gives considerable weight to the society and culture of the language learner, and thus views the language learning task as a result of the interaction between the social, cultural, and individual aspects of the language learner. It also provides findings of a number of studies conducted to investigate the applicability of the theory and its principles to language learning.

Keywords: Sociocultural theory, Second language acquisition

The sociocultural theory in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is largely based on the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), who emphasized the role of the society and culture in shaping the (continuous structuring and) development of the mind. Vygotsky gave much more importance to the interaction of human beings with themselves and with each other as well as with the social and cultural aspects of their lives, and suggested that these interactions play a major role in the way people learn in general. While many psychologists view the human mind as a computational device, Vygotsky proposed that the mind is “mediated”. To illustrate, he points out that as we do not approach the physical world directly but through tools and labor activity, we “use symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships” (Lantolf 2000:1). He argues that these tools, whether physical, psychological or symbolic, are human artifacts that are created by one generation and modified as they are passed on to the future generations.

Vygotsky’s theory in psycholinguistics is based on the assumption that language is one of the symbolic tools that the human civilization has come
Within this framework, the properties of the brain are organized into a culturally-shaped functional system, or mind, that is responsible for higher mental capacities like attention, memory, orientation, planning, thinking, problem-solving, evaluation as well as learning. Vygotsky points out that as the brain develops and modifies its operation in order to handle these capacities, language is continuously molded by its users to serve their psychological, personal, and communicative needs. As “a theory that focuses on humans as eminently thinking beings, actively involved in the creation of their world” (Lantolf and Ahmed 1989:94), the Vygotskyan framework aims at understanding the nature of the human cognitive processes. He also stresses “the importance of social institutions and historical circumstances” (Bialystok and Hakuta 1994:183). This is because the social institutions have an impact on the mental (intellectual) and personal development, and the historical circumstances influence the way and form in which the different human artifacts are transmitted through generations. In brief, Vygotsky claims that there is a link between “semiotically mediated human social interaction and individual cognitive activity” (Lantolf and Ahmed 1989:94).

James Lantolf, among others, has been working within this framework to form the central tenets and core elements of a theory in SLA. Lantolf states that, unlike the Piagetian model of human development where new forms of functioning replace earlier forms, the Vygotskyan approach assumes that different genetic forms coexist in thinking and that each form, whether earlier or later, is assigned different operations according to the demands of the situation and the choice of the individual. Moreover, unlike the Acculturation model (Schumann 1978), which predicts linguistic development through interlanguage change, Vygotsky’s theory suggests that “each mode takes on a specific function relative to the individual speaker who chooses to access a specific mode” (Lantolf and Ahmed 1989:101) in order to carry out a specific task in a certain situation. Therefore, as Vygotsky considers humans to be active participants in the social setting, he believes that humans create a representation of a situation; that is, they structure the situation and the verbal behavior exercised in it. Moreover, when two people communicate with each other there is said to be a relationship of inter-subjectivity that forms a shared social world (the coming together of each one’s world) that initiates and directs the dialogue. Inter-subjectivity refers to the background shared between the conversation participants which provides an agreed-upon foundation for
communication. Another issue of importance here is the degree of control over the dialogue, which determines which world will dominate the conversation. Vygotsky states that when the control relationship is symmetrical, allowing for unlimited interchangeability of dialogue roles, both participants are said to be self-regulated. However, when the control relationship is asymmetrical, promoting the world view of one of the participants at the expense of the other’s, the latter participant is said to be other-regulated.

Moreover, when a second language learner loses self-regulation in the face of a difficult language task, he is said to be object-regulated. Frawley and Lantolf (1985, cited in Lantolf 2000:6) presented intermediate and advanced ESL learners with a difficult narrative task. The performance of the intermediate learners broke down, and they lost control over the mediational means provided by their second language, and became object-regulated. However, the performance of the advanced learners showed control over the mediational means provided by the second language, which led to control over the learning task, and so they are said to be self-regulated. Lantolf (2000:6) argues that “to be an advanced speaker/user of a language means to be able to control one’s psychological and social activity through the language”.

In addition, Vygotsky claims that it is inappropriate “to separate the syntactic organization of an utterance from its psychological organization” (Lantolf and Ahmed 1989:101). This is because the psychological conditions under which an utterance is produced should be taken into account in assessing the grammaticality and appropriateness of the utterance. Moreover, the degree of control the speaker has on the course of the dialogue should be considered when deciding on their regulation roles in the conversation. Lantolf and Ahmed (1989) argue that their subject’s (in a study) production of well-formed sentences indicates that he ceded control of the dialogue to his partner because the negotiation of inter-subjectivity and the shared social world are lost, and he became other-regulated. In contrast, the subject’s shift to a more pragmatic mode indicates that he started sharing the control over the dialogue with his conversation partner, and became self-regulated. This is to say that as inter-subjectivity is negotiated and the shared social world is exploited, the participants feel psychologically more comfortable with the topic and partner, and so less need will there be for fully syntactic speech. The
findings of this study support the Vygotskyan notion of the coexistence of different forms of functioning, each taking over in a specific situation depending on what the language learner, as an active actor, thinks is suitable. Thus, the relationship between the syntactic and pragmatic modes is not a developmental one, rather it is up to the learner to choose which to use when. In addition, the sociocultural theory rejects the position that regards thinking and speaking as one and the same thing; it also rejects the position that thinking and speaking are completely independent phenomena. Instead, it argues that “while separate, thinking and speaking are tightly interrelated” (Lantolf 2000:7) in that publicly derived speech expresses privately initiated thought and that linguistic activities have no real value unless they manifest some thought.

With regard to the phenomenon of SLA, Vygotsky’s theory provides a set of constructs that enable us to take a close up at the task of L2 learning as well as a set of assumptions about learning in general and language learning in specific. One of the main constructs is the theory of activity, which addresses the implications of Vygotsky’s “claim that human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity” (Lantolf 2000:8). This is to say that the human activity results from a psychological and social functional system, the mind, which, in turn, results from the culturally developed biologically given brain. Other researchers posited that for a certain task to be an activity, it has to have motives and goals. As such, activities are carried out in certain spatial and temporal conditions and through appropriate mediational means, and so their nature is expected to change as these elements change. This is to say that an activity does not always end in the same way it was intended or expected. Thus the learners are forced to engage in reformation, that is, to change their relationships with the activity via changing the mediational means.

Verity (2000) shows the stages she went through as she was trying to restore her identity as an expert language teacher. She documents her sense of loss and recovery of self-regulation as she entered the Japanese educational culture. She was trying to scaffold herself, rather than seek (external) other-regulation. Moreover, this relationship changes as the mediational means change as a result of a change in the respective relationships between the learners and the elements of the activity and the other learners in the situation. To illustrate, Thorne (1999, cited in Lantolf
2000:11) concluded that foreign language communicative competence improved as the learners’ interaction was mediated through the internet. As the students reported that they felt less culpable, they, communicating through the internet, started exhibiting negative speech behavior, that is unacceptable language. He argues that despite their illegal language, “this different form of mediation enhanced creative language use in which fun and wit were valued and which fostered dynamic engagement with others instead of comprehensible input and information exchange” (Lantolf 2000:12). This is because learners are viewed here as active actors who can shape and reshape their behavior and the situation as different mediational means are employed.

Another two related constructs in Vygotsky’s theory are internalization and inner speech. Internalization roughly refers to the transfer of external mediation to an internal plane. Inner speech is the self-talk that we engage in as we are planning for an activity or carrying it out. Inner speech affects the way in which we carry out certain activities because it is changed by the external and social experiences that we engage in. Therefore, internalization witnesses the “convergence of thinking with culturally created mediational artifacts” (Lantolf 2000:13). Donato (2000) presents a study that illustrates the value of inner speech during grammar instruction in an ESL class. The students showed that they often need the opportunity to mediate their learning privately, that is, appealing for assistance through private speech. Another notion that the sociocultural theory is based on is the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to the “site where social forms of mediation develop” (Lantolf 2000:16) though it does not refer to a physical place situated in time and space. For Vygotsky, ZPD refers to the difference between what we achieve alone and what we achieve when we work with others or with cultural artifacts. Some researchers point out that the ZPD involves interaction between a novice and an expert where some ability, like language, can be transmitted from the expert to the novice. This situation is similar to apprenticeship where social and professional experience is transmitted from a teacher (master) to a student. The proponents of this theory claim that the transmission of abilities resides in imitation. However, their conception of imitation differs from that of the behaviorists’. To illustrate, this imitation should not be an exact copy of the expert’s (verbal) behavior; that is, it is supposed to be an imitation of portions of the adult’s (expert) utterance. For example, Swain (2000) examines mediation from the perspective of collaborative dialogue
in foreign language classes. She states that the students did not negotiate meaning in their dialogues, rather they negotiated language learning. Therefore, she suggests that collaborative dialogues are a key form of mediated learning. This is because collaborative learning took place between students of different proficiency levels without the intervention of the teacher.

The sociocultural theory seems to capture a lot of important observations in SLA, and thus has great potentials for application in the L2 classroom. This theory views the language learner as being able to restructure the interactive situation and the verbal behavior that it requires. In addition, it insists on the interaction with learners with a higher level of proficiency in the L2 (or L2 native speakers) so as to facilitate language learning, where the teacher can be the L2 speaker of a higher proficiency, or he can assign activities of collaborative learning where the learners can learn from their peers through negotiating form and meaning. Here, the notion of ZPD allows the learner with a lower proficiency level to make use of his potential linguistic abilities with the help of a more linguistically sophisticated user of the L2 (Ellis 1986). Furthermore, if we adopt the notion that the learner has at his disposal more than one functioning form, then we should provide the learner with the elements needed to operate the desired functioning mode. If we emphasize the communicative and interactive aspects of speech (language), it should be considered as a form of behavior manifested in speech acts. This means that the forms of the language will only be learnt if they are meaningful to the learners; that is, they serve a certain function in life activities. And so, learners should be enabled, through the teaching-learning process, to do form-function mapping/association, which refers to the ability of identifying “a particular function which can be performed by means of a particular form” (Ellis 1997:139). Moreover, since language (spoken or sign) is the overt expression of thought (Pinker’s 1994 mentalese, or language of the mind), linguistic forms are most likely to be acquired if the pragmatic and social aspects of language are stressed. In addition, the appropriateness of the speech (or structures) to the communicative situation should be as important as its grammaticality. This is not to say that grammaticality is not important, but rather it should be assessed after considering the psychological and social frame within which the utterance is produced.
As a matter of fact, the shared social world seems important to minimize social distance, and it also affects the degree of control one can have over the dialogue, which, in turn, determines the nature of the produced speech. In addition, since motivation seems to affect our determination for self-regulation, which results from the control over the psychological and social activities in language learning, then it should be enhanced by all the elements of the teaching-learning process. Internalization, though in a different sense, is key to language learning and processing. Likewise, inner speech or self-talk is important in changing and shaping our relationships with ourselves and with things and people in the communicative situation, which determine the path the learning activity is going to take.

References


Use of Native Language in English Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

This paper examines the perception of Omani Teachers and Students in using native language, Arabic, in EFL classes in Secondary Schools, Oman. This paper tries to (a) Find the relationship between teachers' and students' gender and their attitude towards using mother tongue in teaching and learning English as a foreign language, (b) Study how the proficiency in English affects teachers' and students' view about the role of using L1 in L2 classrooms, (c) Investigate how teachers' experience in teaching English affects their attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms, (d) Study the role of students' year of learning and its influence on their attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms.

Keywords: Native language, grammar translation method

Introduction

English has been the dominant language since the British colonization period in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Today, English is the language of modernization and development which is essentially required to enhance the different aspects of life. Hence, people around the world take efforts to learn English in order get better job opportunities. Omanis also pay a great attention to learning English. English was first included in the Omani curricula in 1970 when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to the throne and gave his commands to establish a new Omani nation (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011). Ever since, Oman has realized the importance of English language in serving local and international purposes. English is also at the core of the political, economic and social development. According to Al-Issa (2002), "people in Oman learn English for science and technology acquisition, travelling to non-Arabic and English-speaking countries, finding a white-collar job and cultural analysis and understanding" (p 142) . Recently English is considered to be the "second
official" language in Oman. English has become an essential requirement for almost all aspects of life from finding a job to social communication. It is also a compulsory subject in Omani schools, colleges and universities.

Teaching English is one of the aspects that are given a high attention by all governments around the world. This is due to its importance in achieving local and international progress (Al-Issa, 2002). Moreover, as English is one of the widely spoken languages around the world, it is important to teach English to new generations to keep pace with academic and scientific progress across the globe. Teaching English as a foreign language requires educators to use different teaching methods to facilitate the learning process. Hamadallah (1999) and Al-Belushi (2000) point out that teachers use different methodologies to teach English like direct method, audio-lingual method, communicative approach and grammar-translation method. It was noticed that bilingual educators, especially those who share the same languages with the learners, tend to use the mother tongue while using these methods. This is also known as code switching which means "going from one language to the other in mid speech when both speakers know the same two languages." (Cook, 1991, cited in Al-Belushi, 2000).

Although there are different methods used to teach English, educators still widely use the native language while teaching English (Al-Belushi, 2000) because this method helps them clarify meanings of new words, give instructions and check understanding. Similarly, learners usually use their native language to ask how to say something in L2, to talk in pairs and groups and to translate texts (Al-Shidhani, 2009). However, when it comes to observing the attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms, it is still a hotly debated matter as educators around the world raise different arguments about whether to use or not to use the native language in teaching a foreign language. A group of them (see e.g., Banos, 2009; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Plich, 2002) believe that the use of L1 in L2 classrooms is beneficial and facilitating. They also add that it is essential in some cases for assessing students’ achievement, motivating students and explaining tasks. On the other hand, other educators argue that code switching impedes the process of learning and teaching English (see, e.g., cook, 2001; Taylor, 2002 Tillyer, 2002). This group of educators generally believes that learners do not learn with switching languages and assures
that using only L2 gives learners more chances to practice the target language.

Due to this wide disparity in educators' attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms, it is important to investigate this issue, focusing on the variables that affect the attitudes of both teachers and students towards this issue. Findings of some studies (see e.g., Blackman 2014; Elmetwally, 2012; Nazary, 2008) show that the teachers' and students' attitudes are affected by some factors like: Proficiency in English, learning and teaching processes, school type, context of using L1 and lessons' period.

This research paper attempts to answer the question: How do teachers and students in secondary schools view the role of native language in teaching and learning English as a foreign language? which is important to be investigated for many reasons: Native language (Arabic in this case) is widely used in English language teaching classrooms in Oman, therefore, it is essential to know the teachers' and students' views about this issue. Moreover, most of the studies conducted in this field in Oman mainly study the role and the effects of using the mother tongue in foreign language classrooms which indicates that there is a need to study further the attitudes of teachers and students; this study investigates the impact of gender on the subjected participants attitudes towards this issue, a variable which is investigated by only few researchers, especially in Oman.

**Data Collection Instrument**

To collect data from teachers and students, two quantitative questionnaires were designed, one for each group of them. The questionnaires were developed by the researcher herself and she used some statements from previous questionnaires designed for the same purpose.

**Teachers' Questionnaire**

Teachers' questionnaire contains four parts. The first part aims to collect the participants' biographical information with regard to the objectives of the study: gender, qualification, proficiency in English and teaching experience. The second part is divided into two sections. Section A, is designed to know the teachers' reasons and frequency of using Arabic in English classrooms. It contains 8 statements in which the participants are
asked to respond to by using Likert scale which scales from always to never.

Similarly, section B contains 20 statements that are introduced to collect data about the participants' attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms. Statements 1-9 focusses on finding the teachers' perspectives towards the influence of using Arabic on their students' performance (e.g. using Arabic language helps students to understand new concepts). Statements 10-17 put the spotlight on teachers' attitudes towards their use of Arabic and how would it affect their teaching process (e.g. Using Arabic makes it easier for me to deliver information to students). The last three statements are introduced to know the teachers' perspectives towards using Arabic to facilitate the learning process for low achievers, young learners and whether teachers should allow their students to use L1 or not. The questionnaire is concluded with section C in which the participants are asked open ended questions about the situations in which they use L1 and the amount of time they spend on using Arabic in ELT classes.

**Students' Questionnaire**

Another questionnaire designed to collect data from students' in grades 11 and 12, is made of three sections. The first section is introduced to collect the students' biographical information with regard to the objectives of the study: gender, proficiency in English and year of learning (grade 11 or 12). The second section aims to evaluate the participants' attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms. It includes 20 statements which should be responded to by using Liker scaling. Statements 1-9 investigate the participants' overall attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms (e.g. I prefer using Arabic in my English course classroom). The following statements, 10-20, focus on finding the situations in which students prefer using L1 like translating new words, understanding grammar, asking questions and working in groups. The last section in the questionnaire, section C, contains two open ended questions about the advantages and disadvantages of using L1 from the participants’ perspectives in addition to measuring the amount of using L1 by the students and their teachers. Taking into consideration the low proficient students in English, the questionnaire was translated to Arabic.
Participants

The teachers sample, see Table (1) below, comprised of 70 teachers from both genders were randomly chosen from different public high schools. All the participants share the same mother tongue, Arabic and have English teaching qualification either Bachelor (92.9%) or Masters (7.1%). Shannon (2009) considers the teachers who have been teaching for more than 6 years as expert teachers. Here, most of the participated teachers (72.8%) are experienced in teaching English and are proficient in English.

Table 1: Demographic information about the participants (teachers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Proficiency in English</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F %</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>F %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students sample, see Table (2) below, included 95 male and female students in grades 11 and 12 randomly chosen from different public high schools in Oman. Arabic is the participants' mother tongue and they appeared to have good Academic level and proficiency in English.

Table 2: Demographic information about the participants (students).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 90-100%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-88%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 60%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Level</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3. Procedure

The study went through a number of steps to collect data. The first step was to inform a teacher from each targeted school and send him/her copies of the questionnaire to handle them to his mates and their students later. The researcher sent about 120 copies for students in Rustaq Secondary School, Hail Alawamer, Mosa Bin Naseer high school and Nasir Bin Murshed high school divided equally, 30 for each school. Due to the limited number of the English teachers of secondary stage in the targeted schools, the questionnaire was distributed for a wider number of teachers through e-mail and WhatsApp.

After four days, questionnaires were collected. The researcher received about 97 of the students' questionnaires; two of them were excluded because of some missing information, and collected 70 responses from teachers. It was part of this paper's proposal to study the relationship between teachers' academic degree and their attitudes towards using L1. However; due to having 92.9% teachers holding Bachelor when only 7.1% of them have Masters, it was unreasonable to compare their attitudes based on their teaching qualification. Therefore, this objective was canceled.

Results and Analysis

Attitudes toward using L1 in L2 classrooms

To answer the question about Omani teachers' and students' attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms in secondary schools, data were submitted to SPSS to analyze the findings. Looking at Chart (1) below, it is found that Omani teachers do not prefer to use Arabic when teaching English. About 87.1% of the teachers said that they use Arabic for about 1-30% only of their English classrooms' time when only 2.9% of them said that they spend more than 60% of the class time speaking Arabic.
About 46.3% of the students added that their teachers rarely use Arabic in teaching them English language, see Chart (2). This is in line with Al-Shidani (2009) who found that about 85% of the participated teachers in his study either sometimes or rarely used Arabic in their English language classrooms.

Similarly, about 52.6% of the students said that they rarely use Arabic while they are learning English, except when they are working in groups, because they believe that they need to use the class time to practice their English language, see Chart (3). This result is similar to Elmetwally's (2012) findings which showed that students avoid using L1 in L2 classrooms because they believe that the excessive avoidance of the target language would negatively affect their acquisition of the language.
The results of the current study revealed that Omani teachers do not prefer using Arabic as a facilitating tool for their teaching process. About 57.1% of them disagreed with using Arabic as a tool to manage the class, 58.6% disagreed that the use of Arabic saves class time and 74.3% also disagreed that Arabic helps them to explain the parts that they cannot deliver in English. However, in line with Schweer, (1999), Al-Buraiki (2008) and Al-Nofaie's (2010) findings, related statements in the questionnaire show that the participated teachers' beliefs about the importance of using Arabic to facilitate their students' learning process; most of the subjected teachers agreed that using Arabic helps students to better understanding of new concepts, new words and grammar in addition to increasing their students' comfort and achievement.

Taking into consideration results of statements (6) which investigates teachers' attitudes towards using L1 to teach low achievers, 55.7% of the teachers agreed that L1 is helpful for low level students. Similarly, Al-Nofaie's (2010) study showed that teachers prefer using L1 with low level learners to facilitate their learning process and assess their understanding.

According to the responses to statement 7 in the teachers’ questionnaire which investigates their attitudes towards using L1 for young learners, 45.7% of the teachers think that young learners should be exposed to L2 as much as possible. One of the teachers mentioned in the open ended question about the importance of exposing young learners to the target language and how such exposure help them acquire the language more easily. This is in contrast with Al-Buraiki's (2008) findings which showed
that teachers believe that young learners need more use of L1 than older learners to facilitate their learning process and increase their confidence.

On the other hand, in contrast with Elmetwally (2012) and Al-Nofaie's (2010), students showed negative attitude towards using Arabic in English language classrooms. Putting the spotlight on statements 1-6, shows that Omani students tend to avoid using Arabic while learning English. About 60% of the students said that they do not prefer using their mother tongue in English language classrooms and 44.2% of them said that L1 is not beneficial for their learning of L2. Moreover, about 47.4% disagreed with statement number 5 which investigates the role of L1 in motivating students to learn L2, while 27.4% of them weren’t sure about it. However, statement 9 shows that 57.9% of the participated students prefer to be taught by a teacher who speaks their mother tongue. Vaddapalli and Bainy (2012) clarified that students' avoidance of using Arabic indicates that they like to use the English language classroom to practice English as it is the best and the only environment in which they can do so. Especially in an Arabic region like Oman, students prefer to have a teacher who speaks their language because it makes them feel more confident.

**Gender and Attitudes towards Using L1 in L2 Classrooms**

The second question of this study aims to find whether there is a relationship between teachers' and students' gender and their attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms. As shown in Table (8) below, an independent t-test showed that there are no significant differences between male and female teachers' attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms ($P= 0.728$, $t = -349$).

<p>| Table8: Teachers Gender and their Attitude Towards Using L1 in TEL |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|------|------|-----|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.9900</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>-349</td>
<td>.728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.0486</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for students, gender may also play a role in affecting their attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms.
Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that female students showed a more positive attitude towards using L1 than male students. Demir (2005) found that female students are more in favor with using L1 in L2 classrooms. However, the participants in the current study showed opposite results. Looking at Table (9) below, it is found that there are differences between male and female students' perspectives ($P=93, t=2.735$). Male students are more in favor with using L1 than female students. This result concurs with the findings of Salah (2012). The participants in his study clarified that male students use Arabic more than female students because it is easier for them and due to their low academic level and proficiency in English. This contrast between the findings may be a result of the difference between the ages of the subjected students in each study, the number of participated students and the time of studies.
The third question of this study aims to investigate if there is a relationship between the teachers' and the students' proficiency in English and their attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms.

Teachers' proficiency in English can play an affecting role on their attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms. Kamhi-Stein & Mahboob (2003) found that the higher proficiency of English that teachers have, the more they use L1 in teaching English. However, similar to Duff and Polio (1994) findings', the current study found no significant difference ($P= 0.124, t= 1.558$) between teachers with excellent proficiency in English and those with a very good level.

To answer the research question about the relationship between students' proficiency in English and their attitudes toward using L1 in L2 classrooms, the students' data were submitted to a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Analysis results revealed a statically significant difference ($F= 7.113, p=.000$) in the attitudes in respect to the participants' proficiency in English. Table (11) shows the rank ordering of the levels of students' proficiency and illustrates that

### Table9: Students' Gender and Attitudes Towards Using L1 in L2 Classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.7646</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>-2.735</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.1457</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table10: Proficiency in English and Teachers' Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.1815</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.558</td>
<td>.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.9174</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
there is a positive relationship between students' low level of L2 and their attitudes towards using L1 which is equivalent to what was found by Weschler, (1997), Cook (2001), Nation (2003) and Al-Nofaie (2010). From the analysis of the open ended questions in the questionnaire about the reasons why students use L1 in English language classrooms, low level students said that they prefer using L1 as it helps them to understand what is discussed in the class because according to their proficiency in English, they cannot understand all what is discussed in L2.

| Table 11: Students' Proficiency in English and their attitudes |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----|-----|
| EngPro          | Mean            | F   | sig |
| fair            | 2.4000          | 2.536 | .001 |
| good            | 2.5658          |     |     |
| verygood        | 2.9013          |     |     |
| excellent       | 3.2894          |     |     |

**Teachers' Experience in Teaching and Their Attitudes**

To find if there is a relationship between teachers' experience in teaching English and their attitudes towards using L1 in English language classrooms, data were submitted to a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). As shown in Table (12) below, the results indicated that there are slight significant differences between the teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in the EFL classroom according to their experience in teaching English ($F= 3.003$). More experienced teachers showed negative attitude towards using L1. This finding is similar to Duff and Polios' (1994) findings which showed that Arabic was mostly avoided in experienced teachers' classrooms.
To answer the question about students' attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms, it is important to know if the participants' year of studying affected their opinion. According to t-test results, there is no significant difference between grade 11 students' perspectives towards using L1 in L2 classrooms and those in grade 12. In contrast, Gebretsadkan (2013) found that there is a slight difference between these two groups. Students at grade 12 showed a more negative attitude towards the use of L1; the study found that they rarely use it in their English language classrooms. This contrast in the findings might be a result of the different size of the participants group in each study.

**Table13: Proficiency in English and Teachers' Attitudes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.9033</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

This study investigated Omani teachers' and students' attitudes towards using the native language (Arabic in this case) in teaching English as a foreign language. It also focused on studying the factors that affect their attitudes in regard with their gender, proficiency in English, teachers' experience in teaching and students' year of learning.

The current study revealed that Omani teachers and students in secondary schools have negative attitudes towards using the native language in
English language classrooms. Findings showed that most of the teachers use Arabic for only 1-30% of the class times. They said that Arabic should be minimized in English classrooms and should be restricted in some cases when students cannot receive the information. They added that L1 should be avoided as much as possible in young learners' classrooms. However, they agreed that using L1 facilitates the learning process for low level students as it helps them understand better.

Similarly, students showed negative attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms. They refer their avoidance of using L1 to the importance of utilizing the English learning classrooms' environment to practice English language.

The study also found that there is no difference between male and female teachers' attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms. However, results showed that male students are more in favor with using L1 than female students. Moreover, results showed that teachers' proficiency in English has no influence on their attitudes towards using L1. However, students' attitudes were affected by their proficiency in English as low proficient students showed positive attitudes towards the issue unlike those with higher proficiency. The study then revealed that more experienced teachers showed more negative attitudes towards using L1 and that students' year of learning has no influence on their attitudes towards using Arabic in English language classrooms.

One of the major limitations of the study is the small study population. As the study investigates the attitudes of two huge groups around Oman, teachers and students in secondary schools, findings would be more accurate with a larger number of participants. Moreover, random sample of participants led to exclude one of the study objectives. The researcher aimed to investigate the relationship between teachers' academic degree and their attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms. However, receiving only 6 masters holders and 89 bachelor holders would not show fair and accurate findings, therefore, the study of this objective was canceled.

To develop further research, it is recommended to study other factors that might affect teachers' and students' attitudes towards using L1 in L2 classrooms, such as teachers' qualification, school type, students' overall academic level and their previous background about English language.
Moreover, it would be a good idea to study this issue using another instrument. The researcher recommend investigating the participants’ attitudes after assessing two groups of students, with the same age, academic level and proficiency in English, first group is taught English by using only English and the other group is taught using the native language.

References


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Multilingualism and Oman Academic Culture

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Abstract

This paper investigates the perceptions of college students and professors towards multilingualism. It discusses the impact of multilingualism on the mind, psychology and social behaviour of individuals and the economic impact of multilingualism in the job market. It also analyses the results of a survey filled by 52 students (38 females and 17 males) and interviews with professors from The English Department and The Language Centre in Sultan Qaboos University. The main aspects that the data collection process include are the perceptions towards the advantages of multilingualism, the problems that hinder maintaining and learning additional languages, and the need to fostering multilingualism in local higher education institutions, specifically SQU.

Key words  Multilingualism, University students, language acquisition, sociolinguistics, multicompetence, Oman, SQU, bilingualism, Language Anxiety

The process of becoming multilingual differs from one individual to another. It possibly relies on Carroll’s (1971) concept of “language learning aptitude”. Some people become multilingual because they must adapt to a new environment or a new lifestyle in another country. Some have the luxury of being taught several languages as a part of their education in school, while others experience what is commonly known as cultural immersion. Cultural immersion happens when an individual takes interest in a certain culture due to being exposed to one of its aspects (tourism, entertainment through music, movies …etc.) to an extent where they start showing interest in learning its language. So many young Omanis have grown up watching Japanese cartoons called anime that they have been motivated to learn the language. They also got the advantage of learning English in school and might have been privileged to study either French or German as of recent additions to the Omani curriculum. All these
contribute to creating the modern multilingual individual, as it can be found that some people become multilingual through all the methods mentioned.

Oman has become a metropolitan country that welcomes people from all nationalities to live on its land. These expatriates bring along their own experiences and their languages. The Omani population has never been bombarded with this number of languages throughout its history. Before the 1970s, Omanis spoke Arabic as their official language. The only addition to that was some non-written languages like the languages of the south or those of Balushi and Lawati families. However, currently, the second language, English, is spoken by the majority of the younger population, since its entrance to the basic Omani curriculum by the end of the year 1998 (Valentine, 2011). Higher education institutions like the university of Sultan Qaboos offer more language courses to its students based on the rising awareness of the importance of being multilingual, especially that Oman’s economy relies largely on fields like tourism and trade (exporting and importing), it has become necessary for Omani graduates to know more languages to fit in the job market and be able to benefit their country as much as possible.

Is there a need to foster multilingualism in higher education institutions?

Multilingualism has been proven to have a big influence on what makes today’s societies as flourished and culturally-diverse. The advantages of being multilingual overweigh the problems that hinder it. The only question we are left with is to what extent are university students and professors aware of the importance of being multilingual? And how willing are universities, like Sultan Qaboos University, to foster multilingualism?

Data Collection: Perceptions towards Multilingualism

Due to the impact of multilingualism on the mind, social behavior, economy and local identity, it could be said that multilingualism is an advantage that requires mental and social effort to maintain. The problems that stand in the way of its maintenance tend to have adverse impacts on the personality and could lead to shyness or embarrassment, an obstacle for development, especially in young adults. Nevertheless, the ways to encourage and promote multilingualism in higher education institutions
could solve such problems and contribute to larger scale aspects like economic progress and development.

Therefore, Chapter 3 investigates how important multilingualism is to higher education institutions in Oman, as a step to localize the study. It also aims to find out the perceptions of college students towards being multilingual whether they consider it an advantage to academic performance and, later on, lead to success in their careers or not. Furthermore, if multilinguals had the aptitude to pursue learning more languages, the problems faced by these individuals that could disrupt motivation, as well as threaten maintaining languages in the repertoire could be tended to and solved through appropriate methods to fostering, encouraging and promoting it within the local environment.
Data collection: Instruments and Participants

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was distributed on 52 multilingual individuals from different nationalities studying in SQU, paying particular attention to those who are part of the language courses provided by the university.

The questionnaire focused on aspects like the means of and the reasons behind learning those languages, the problems they face being multilinguals, their perceptions of multilingualism being an advantage to the mind and to graduates in the job market, and of the language courses offered in SQU. They were also given the freedom to suggest a number of languages they would like to learn as well as the ideal approaches of fostering languages in SQU. Items included questions of scale of agreement and open answer questions such as:

1- What are the methods through which you learned the languages you speak and why?

2- I feel that speaking several languages is an advantage to graduates (scale)

3- Do you feel intimated when you speak to a native speaker of (any) of the language(s) you speak? If you chose "yes" or "it depends" in the previous question, have you ever avoided talking to someone despite knowing the language?
4- The language courses provided in SQU are enough for students to reach the level they wish (scale)

5- More languages should be taught in SQU (scale)

6- SQU graduates need to speak more than two languages (Arabic, English) (scale)

7- Multilingual people tend to be more successful in their jobs (scale)

8- How, in your opinion, can the university foster learning languages?

The first question was to establish a solid ground to work on and to make sure that the methods of acquiring languages could be collectively categorized. It is also to compare the results with a study by Valentine in 2011 on the impact of adding the English language to school curricula in 1998. Question 2 is, in a way, an appetizer for the follow up interview questions about the impact of multilingualism on the mind and to study its impact on academic performance and the future careers of students. It is related to the studies conducted by Sedden and Simsek in 2012 and Dewale in 2007 about multilinguals’ “multicompetence”. Question 3 is mainly related to Language Anxiety, a concept introduced by McIntyre & Gardner (1994) and discussed in the Literature review in section 2.6.

The last four questions aim to, first, investigate the perceptions of students towards the need for multilingualism in higher education institutions and, second, to relate the collected data to a study done by Stanford University on the economic impact of multilingualism and to the findings of Dewale’s (2007) research on the social impact of multilingualism.

**Interviews**

In order to gain further insight on the different perceptions towards multilingualism and its impact on aspects discussed in the literature review, a set of interviews were conducted.

The participants in the interviews included multilingual students and professor, a linguistics assistant professor, and the coordinator of the English Foundation Programme for the College of Engineering. The
students were interviewed as a follow up to some questions they have answered in the survey:

1- Do you consider yourself fluent in the languages you have learnt after your second language?

2- Do you have the aptitude to learn even more languages?

3- How has multilingualism affected your way of thinking?

4- Do you consider multilingualism an essential skill for graduates to have successful careers?

On the other hand, professors were asked similar questions concerning being both multilingual and having taught multilingual students:

1- What are the means through which you became multilingual? Has that affected your fluency, in your opinion?

2- How, do you think, has multilingualism affected your cognition in general, and has that contributed in any way to your academic performance?

3- Did you face any problems switching between languages or maintaining the same level of proficiency in each language system?

4- Do you think SQU or college graduates in general should learn more than the two basic languages they are taught in school (Arabic and English)?

5- How could multilingualism be fostered in the university, in your opinion?

Results

Questionnaire

The participants were asked about the means through which they acquired additional languages. They agreed that school plays a vital role in teaching languages, especially the second language, English. It could be assumed that the way those students perceive fluency through the length of the period of studying affected their choice of school as a dominant method.
The majority of students identified with being “self-taught” especially in English.

In the follow up interview, some students explained that they defined it as the approaches they willingly take to learn a language. That includes watching movies, reading books, joining or listening to podcasts. This leads to another assumption on the impact of multilingualism on the aptitude of learning languages; the more languages one learns, the more motivated they get to become adequate in each of its skills on their own.

Considering the great impact of the aptitude for learning languages, the participants were also asked to choose among the reasons provided in the survey some of those that led them to learn additional languages. The results concluded that 62% of the participants had no hand in learning languages and were taught in school, specifically their second language. Simultaneously, approximately 55% of them agreed that the other acquired languages beside those learnt in school were due to cultural immersion or interest. An assumption that could be made in this particular item is the rise of awareness between college students on the importance of multilingualism, as in addition to the previous percentage, a total of 57% of the participants chose the item “I think it would benefit me in the future when I enter the job market.” As a reason behind learning languages like French and German as they believe that these languages are the most commonly spoken after English.
How did you learn additional languages?

- One parent speaks a different language: 7
- Self-taught: 36
- University: 34
- Institutions\language courses: 19
- School: 46

Why did you learn additional languages?

- For my future job: 30
- My parents made me learn: 15
- Immigration: 12
- Cultural immersion: 27
- School system: 31

---

Fig. 3.2 means of acquiring languages

Fig. 3.3 reasons behind acquiring languages
In relation to that, another aspect that has been focused on was the perception of students on multilingualism being an advantage. As the figure below indicates, almost 92% of the participants agreed that they considered being multilingual an advantage on the professional aspect with almost no disagreement whatsoever.

When asked about their reasons for choosing agreement, the answers varied between their considering it important to get better jobs in the sense of position and financial status, especially those of them who are studying tourism and translation, in addition to the enhancement of their communication skills and general open-mindedness. As shown in figure 3.5, 47 out of 52 participants agreed that multilingualism increases the chance of being successful professionally. They, however, had varying opinions on the necessity of graduating from university with more than just English as a second language. As indicated in figure 3.6, the vast majority of participants were either with or neutral about the need for being multilingual.
Another aspect that was highlighted through the survey was Language Anxiety, a concept introduced by McIntyre & Gardner in 1994, and how
the intimidation of conversing in an acquired language to a native speaker could cause the participants to withdraw early or feel embarrassed enough to start a conversation in the first place. Participants agreed that the language itself plays a big part in their anxiety, but the majority (Almost 82.4 %) agreed that it is present in such situations with variety in degree. Those who agreed with the previous item were asked if they ever avoided a conversation because they did not trust their language skills. More than half of these individuals disagreed with the item, saying, when asked to give their reasons, that they would not mind making mistakes in front of a native speaker on account of the fact that they would probably learn a lot if they spoke rather than remaining silent. Those who chose yes (almost 45%) defended their choice saying that they would feel embarrassed and shy and are too afraid to make mistakes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>It depends on the language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel intimated when you speak to a native speaker of (any) of the language(s) you speak?</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever avoided talking to someone despite knowing the language?</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.7 indicates the level of satisfaction of the survey participants with the language courses provided in SQU (French, German, Italian, and Japanese for Beginners). Almost 44% of the students are not satisfied with these language courses, while, despite being eager to learn additional languages, 17 students did not know enough about the courses to form a solid opinion about their usefulness.
Therefore, as a step to pinpointing possible methods of improving the language courses, participants were asked if they thought that more languages should be taught in the university and they were invited to suggest the languages they thought they would love to learn. The majority of participants agreed that more languages should be taught, but there were few who voted against the idea. Spanish was the most suggested language by students, followed by Korean and Turkish respectively.
Suggestions from students on the ways languages could be fostered in the university encouraged adding more courses, cultural events and gatherings between different nationalities on campus. A portion of the surveyed group also suggested making language courses compulsory before graduating.

**Interviews**

The interviews were from different academic backgrounds: some were students (Two female literature students and one male engineering student) while others were teachers who work in SQU.

**Students**

The interviews with 3 students were a follow up to the survey to focus on certain aspects of the study. One of the interviewees was a 20 year-old SQU student who reads, writes, and speaks four languages but understands five. The interviewee studied his third language, French, for seven years. However, due to lack of practice, he found himself losing it easily. The interview focused on the relationship between the length of the period of time that language was studied and the level of fluency in it in addition to the importance of multilingualism for them both academic-wise and career-wise.
When asked if they thought that being multilingual has helped them acquire the additional languages they speak, the interviewees pointed out that knowing different languages has helped them establish a connection between the new (acquired) and old (already fluent) language. Additionally, they put emphasis on the universality of grammar and how languages are quite similar through neurolinguistics. One of the interviewees commented that he could easily comprehend languages he did not know like German or Jabbali. Therefore, it could be assumed that acquiring languages is not like adding books to different shelves in the same room, but adding pages to the same book.

The students agreed that they would love to learn more languages. They agreed that their multilingualism will be helpful in their future career. Engineering relies on communication and teamwork, while literature and linguistics demand good knowledge of several languages.

Professors

The three professors agreed that they thought of multilingualism as an advantage to cognition but not necessarily academic performance. The language repertoire in multilingual individuals, they mutually pointed out, allows them to acquire more languages flexibly; therefore, makes them faster in adapting to new situations and more proficiently than their peers. Dr. Albalushi, a linguistics professor in the English department of Sultan Qaboos University, explained that the process of becoming multilingual works as an analytical exercise for the brain and allows it to gain what he referred to as “neural elasticity.” This skill makes multilinguals more capable of handling complexity and computational tasks.

When asked about their opinion on the language courses provided in SQU, all interviewees agreed that there should be more focus on these courses. One professor suggested that local heritage languages are taught as elective courses in order to maintain the local Omani identity, while the other interviewees saw it more fitting if the current courses become more in depth to suit the reality of the job market. The coordinator for the English foundation program noted that it may not be as necessary for all graduates to acquire additional languages; jobs like engineering mostly rely on the lingua franca, English, as a medium for communication. However, he
pointed out that it could be needed in certain countries like Oman, as many Omani engineers resolve to learn Indian language due to working with people who may not speak any other language but that.

**The Importance of Multilingualism to University Students: Findings**

**Limitations**

The study has witnessed a number of limitations. The first one was in terms of the sample size for the survey; it required more multilingual individuals than 52. Results would have been more diverse had there been more participants. Moreover, the time frame in which the field work was done led to getting a smaller number of participants; students were busy with examinations and refused to take the time for an interview or a survey. Another limitation lied in the languages the fluency of the participants in the languages they spoke. Being multilingual requires understanding a language and being able to express in it even in the most basic way. However, some participants’ knowledge of a few words in one language created a reluctance on whether they should add it to the number of languages they know or not. Lastly, there weren’t enough participants among students who could speak the local heritage languages; their opinion on the suggested courses for their languages would have enriched the study further.

**Findings and discussion**

The study included Omani (41) and expatriate (11) students who live in Oman and professors who teach at Sultan Qaboos University. The dominant gender of participants was largely female (38) compared to males (14). Below is a summary of the most important finding based on the three points of focus in the study.

**Becoming multilingual**

School still plays the most vital method for learning languages. 46 out of 52 participants in this study learned the languages they know in school. Valentine (2011) had foreseen this addition of languages to the Omani curricula after 1998, with the addition of the English language to basic
education. Additionally, the rise of the number in language institutions around the Sultanate is shown in the number of participants who picked it as a means for learning languages; 18 out of 52 people went to private institutions to enhance their language abilities, proving, also, the rise in the awareness of the importance of multilingualism in the Omani society. Finally, the fact that 33 participants consider themselves as self-taught proves the capability of multilingual individuals to acquiring more languages on their own faster, proving the findings of Carroll (1971) on the concept of “Language Learning Aptitude” that shows that multilinguals tend to be more motivated to learn new languages more than their bilingual or monolingual counterparts. It also supports the study conducted by Simsek and Cedden (2012) who concluded that trilingual speakers reacted faster and were much more capable of remembering vocabulary and terms from different languages with less errors than the bilingual speakers.

**Multilingualism: an advantage to SQU graduates?**

As a response to this question, 94% of the participants agreed that being multilingual has advantages on students both economically and cognitively.

Their answers varied between getting better job opportunities and getting a better pay, which is similar to what a previous study by Stanford University has found. Oman is a country that fits Dewale’s (2007) claim that “active multilingualism is a prerequisite for well-paid jobs.”

The other advantage that participants felt was the cognitive development and the ability to acquire more languages easily. Participants stated that their linguistic skills and shifting\switching tasks were not hindered after becoming multilingual. This goes in parallel with the 2011 study by Cook, stating that multilinguals have ‘multicompetence’, a control mechanism in the brain that allows language systems to function in parallel instead of supressing one on account of the other. Therefore, they are able to perform faster and more flexibly in tasks that require adaptability and wit.
Language anxiety in college students

A major contributor to the decline of proficiency in language learning is what McIntyre & Gardner (1994, cited in Dewale, 2007) defined as “Second Language Anxiety”

A large group of the study participants (42) said that they felt intimidated by native speakers and that it, at times, hindered their communication, leaving them embarrassed and shy to make any other future attempt. Such reluctance has adverse consequences on language development and on the mental state of the multilingual individual and could consequently hinder the motivation to either maintain the language or to have the aptitude to learn another. However, some participants did not face that problem but actually welcomed the social interaction with native speakers. Their disagreement with the stated item could be proof that they have adapted the “additive” type of multilingualism that has been studied by Lambert (1974), Cenoz and Diaz (1998) in which the acquired language is not dominant over the native language. Consequently, the speaker would feel comfortable and confident in whichever language he chooses to speak. It is also proof that language anxiety cannot be generalized as a reoccurring problem. The majority of the participants of this study did not mind making mistakes when speaking to a native speaker. On the contrary, they looked forward to having conversations and even making mistakes; they would learn from direct interaction much more than what books or videos could ever teach them. It would also help them maintain that language and motivate them to learn more of its skills.

The language courses provided in SQU and the need for fostering languages.

Multilingual employees are wanted and preferred in many work environments such as Tourism, Linguistics, Business and Trade, and even Medicine and Engineering. As Valentine (2011) pointed out, Oman’s economy relies greatly on fields like tourism, trade, and education. In order to benefit from their country as much as possible, graduates must have enough communication skills and knowledge of cultures to broaden their vision. Multilingualism could be considered a medium for obtaining all these skills.
Stanford university’s study on the economic impact of multilingualism discussed the advantages of multilingualism on income as it could raise a person’s salary by a $100 on average. SQU students seem to be aware of this advantage since 92% of the participants agreed that multilingualism is an advantage for SQU graduates, in addition to the fact that some gave reasons such as the need for team work in jobs like Tourism and Engineering that require a smooth process of communication.

What can be concluded from the study is the rise of awareness among people in Oman, specifically those in higher educational institutions about the importance of multilingualism. They wish for the fostering and promotion of multilingualism in the higher education context.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study aimed to answer the question: To what extent are local universities aware of the importance of multilingualism? And how do students feel about acquiring more languages? The results of the study showed that 92% of the study participants are aware of the importance of being multilingual in this age of global communication; they, as a matter of fact shared opinions that supported the results of studies by Stanford University about the economic impact of graduating as a multilingual individual.

Multilingualism being regarded as an advantage through neurolinguistics research by Peal and Lambert (1974) whose findings showed multilinguals’ superiority in mental flexibility tasks, Cook (2011) who coined the term ‘multicompetence’, and Francois Grosjean (2011) who maintained that speaking several languages in different contexts results in something similar to a personality shift. Considering these perceptions, it is important to note the local reaction towards speaking to natives in different languages. Majority of SQU student respondents claimed not having a problem with making mistakes in front of a native speaker because they believed it would enrich their learning experience and make them more confident in the knowledge they have.

Direct interaction and exposure to a language is a good practice for multilinguals to help them maintain the languages they speak. It is also a confidence boost and an attraction to students to become motivated to keep
learning different languages. There are several recommendations to foster learning languages in Sultan Qaboos University from both student and teacher participants of this study.

The recommendations that could promote multilingualism in higher education institutions, specifically Sultan Qaboos University include:

1. Conducting further research on multilingual students

2. Facilitating more foreign language learning programs e.g. Spanish, Korean, and Turkish

3. Having Exchange Programs to reinforce foreign language learning and put it in cultural frame.

4. Extending the number of seats in the languages courses (French, Italian, and German) as “students in many cases cannot take the target course because the seats number is limited.”

5. Encouraging students who took language courses to travel abroad or to be put in a professional environment that allows them to practice their languages.

6. Reviewing the language policies in the university and allowing students to have a voice and an opinion in that process.

7. Allowing professors from different foreign countries to create cultural events that include the chance to learning the different languages they speak.

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“No Worries” in Australia and ‘Worrisome Indianisms’

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Abstract:

English, emerging successfully as a global language has sprouted innumerable heads like Hydra in Greek mythology. It has clandestinely but authoritatively led to varieties of Englishes which in turn showcase their peculiarities and complexities. Words and phrases comprising language come to display different meanings and implications when used in different countries. English is global but various in usage. It is in this context that this paper locates “Australian English”, and particularly sees the cultural complexity of a common Australian phrase “No worries”. Pointing out how language at its core is culturally located, it foregrounds the same phenomenon in India by looking at certain usages which have come to be called “Indianisms”. Thus, it reflects how language is fluid and today changes are inevitable and anything is possible.

Keywords: Englishes, culture, usage, fluid, dominance

In Greek mythology, Hydra is an ancient serpent-like water monster that sprouts two more heads when its head is cut off. Hercules kills this Hydra – one of his twelve labours. English today is hydra-headed. Earlier, we had British English, American English and Australian English. Now, we have – Basic English, Bermudian English, Canadian English, Caribbean English, Commonwealth English, English English, Globish, Hawaiian English, Hiberno-English, Highland English, Hong Kong English, Indian English, International English, Jamaican English, Liberian English, Malawian English, Malaysian English, Mid-Ulster English, Newfoundland English, New Zealand English, Philippine English, Plain English, Scottish English, Simplified English, Singaporean English, South African English, Special English, Standard English, Thai English and Welsh English. The list goes on.
These varieties come with their own complexities when a learner, speaker or teacher confronts them. If a Britisher visits Australia and an Australian asks the Britisher, “How are you going?” the Britisher would probably reply, “By bus!” but eyebrows are likely to be raised because usage differs. Here are three samples of Greetings:

In Britain, it would be: How are you?
Reply: Fine. Thanks.

In U.S.A, it would be: How are you doing?
Reply: Just great. Thanks.

In Australia, it would be: How are you going?
Reply: Good. Thanks.

A simple form of greeting can become disastrous and embarrassing if one is unaware of a particular usage. David Crystal in his *Language Revolution* remarks:

Teachers, at the cutting edge of language works, routinely bemoan their plight. A typical remark: In the old days, there was American English and British English and I knew where I was; now, I’ve no idea where I am. (98)

English, the hydra-headed creature, seems to be sprouting new heads as the world becomes more global.

In this context, let us look at a peculiar phrase, actually a form of slang in Australian usage. If an Australian is thanked for doing someone a favour, the Australian would be likely to respond with the reply, “No worries.” It implies all these - “do not worry”, “that’s alright”, “sure thing” and “you’re welcome.” “No worries” has come to be the most common phrase used in Australia. Its cultural roots have been traced back to 1966 but its place of origin is uncertain. It has a wide prevalence in New Zealand after Australia.
In Hong Kong, it is a favourite catchphrase in corporate circles. It has been found that this phrase has existed as “mo munn tai” (No problems no worries) in Cantonese for more than a hundred years. It is also interesting to note that ‘No worries” is being used more heavily in Singapore and Malaysia than Australia or New Zealand.

This phrase has made a splash in U.S.A, Canada as well as Britain. It is presumed that the use of this phrase by Steve Irwin on the T.V programme The Crocodile Hunter could be one of the causes. It made a splash in America during the mid-1980s. The year 1986 saw the international success of the box-office hit of the film The Crocodile Dundee and Paul Hogan’s catchphrase in this film “No worries” is also seen as a possible reason for its spread. In 1994, a Walt Disney musical, an animated feature of The Lion King, called “Hakuna Matata” popularised this phrase among American kids. In this animation, a meerkat called Timon and a warthog called Pumbaa teach the main character Simba, a lion cub to forget his troubled past and live in the present. Elton John and Tim Rice who wrote this song found this phrase in a Swahili phrase book. In 2011, the use of this phrase rose to 1.5 per million words. The Oxford English Dictionary first noted its use in 1965, when someone remarked about the benefits of beer-drinking, “No worry. It’s amazing what a few schooners of jolly does for a bloke.”

Now, what is fascinating about “No worries” is that in 1978, Beth and Shaun refer to “No worries, mate” as the “national motto of Australia”. This widely used Australian phrase is understood as representing a sense of friendliness, ‘mateship’, positivism and good humour. Annette Kobak in The New York Times Book Review calls “No worries” as a “ritual incantation” with a “peculiar charm.”

This phrase with its dominant presence in Australia needs to be located culturally within the context of ‘mateship’, another strong cultural phenomenon in Australia. The very geographical vastness of the Australian landscape has been a catalyst for so much that we today identify as “Australian”, especially colonialism, the various literatures that rose from it and its various socio-political phenomena. In this, the presence of a fellow being may probably be seen as a sign of companionship, a sense of physical and emotional security and self-assurance. Thus, a need for human company seems to have influenced the concept of ‘mateship’, which again
is seen in the creation of this national phrase “no worries”. Maybe, it is this context which has sustained the continued use of this phrase to the contemporary multicultural scenario. This has probably resulted in “no worries” evolving as a motto of Australia, an identity marker of Australian culture, land and language. Richard D Lewis sees this form of expression as representing the relaxed attitude in Australian culture. Anna Wierzbicha in Semantic, Culture and Cognition classifies “No worries” among the most characteristic Australian expressions.

Now, let us see this comment by Samela Harris from an article in The Advertiser (2004), “The Americans have no idea of the etymology of ‘No Worries’. So, while they may cheerily adopt our ‘No worries’ mantra, ‘no worries’ will never catch on as an attitude.” A phrase and a particular word in this comment “No worries mantra” draw my attention. We have an Indian word “mantra” besides “no worries”. This Indian word is a global term now. It is a word with a cultural and religious connotation but today’s global consumer culture has absorbed it into its corporate abyss. “Guru” and “avatar” are other such terms.

Everywhere, language is culture. It is identity. In India, we have certain usages, typical of our country. Let me call them “worrisome Indianisms”. They are popularly used, a part of our day-to-day language but can be ‘worrisome’ to someone outside India, even to some within. We say, “She’s foreign returned” or “She’s from foreign” implying that “She has come from a foreign country.” A woman is described as “homely”. It is definitely a sexist comment but with a positive implication. A boy and a girl fall in love and if they get married, it becomes a “love marriage”. Then, the question arises- are ‘arranged’ marriages bereft of love? If you study in a convent, you are “convent educated” and if your brother is abroad, you say, “My brother is in foreign”. In a wedding invitation, you are often likely to find the expression, “Come with your near and dear to my wedding”. We have to figure out who come under the category “near and dear”. If one is out of town, we say “He/she is out of station”. Other typical comments include – “Her face-cut is impressive” or “He speaks chaste Hindi”. If you want to be informed about something, you say, “Please intimate me”. Here, the adjective is used as a verb. In this Indian linguistic mela, we have another popular suffix – “walla” and thus we have “dabbawalla”, “autowalla”, “rickshawalla”, “chaiwalla”, “dudhwalla” and “dhobiwalla”.

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Much Indianisms have become a part of global usage but do not much carry the cultural load as the Australian “No worries” does. In India too, language and usage have a geographical base but do not share a strong bond as they do in Australia. Interestingly, the Australian “No worries” seems to have touched the Indian shores too. Many earlier references have been seen. Yet, a recent headline in *The Indian Express* on December 2, 2014, reads, “No worries India can reach CB series finals”.

English indeed is a hydra-headed language. No worries, we have no Hercules to cut off the several heads that have sprung up in recent times. More heads are bound to pop out. No worries, we are in a post-global era. Everything is possible.

**References:**


Perceptions of Korean students in Manila on non-native speaking teachers

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Abstract
The study stemmed from the need to obtain a deeper understanding of English language learners in educational institutions in Manila. It specifically investigated the general perception of Korean learners based in Manila on non-native teachers who teach them English, pertinent to the former’s learning experience and to the latter’s teachers’ language teaching attributes and teaching skills. A five-point scale questionnaire adapted from Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) was used as instrument to measure the learners’ perceptions. Thirty-six students from two universities and 33 students from two language academies in Manila participated in the study. Findings reveal that majority of the students agree on their perceptions towards non-native teachers and the teachers’ teaching efficacy. Pedagogical implications such as the teachers’ continuous training in order to improve their teaching skills that would address the learners’ needs were discussed in the study.

Keywords: Perception, Korean, English Language teaching, sociolinguistics, education migration

Introduction
In an attempt to intensify its students’ competence in English, and perhaps due to economic reasons, Korean educational institutions have been showing preference in hiring native-speaker teachers which appears to be part of the English Program in Korea (EPIK) (Schroeder, 2011) which is said to promote cross cultural exchanges in the English learning environment of its learners which consequently appears to favor native-speaking citizens such as Americans, British and Australians; hence, the inclination towards hiring native speakers as teachers of English courses
despite the lack of sufficient qualifications still seems to be the trend. Phillipsson (1992 in Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002) calls this phenomenon as the native speaker fallacy. In fact, in 2006, there were approximately 2,000 native English speaking teachers in South Korea specifically in public schools alone. This development is what Mahboob and Lipovsky (2009) describes as racism in the culture of English language teaching profession.

However, in the global scene, there also appears to be an increasing trend in terms of South Korean learners opting to study overseas. For instance, the Bureau of Immigration of the Philippines revealed that there were 32,000 Koreans who applied for student visa in 2011. A number of Koreans come to the Philippines to finish their education and at the same time to take advantage of its label as the world’s budget English teacher (Geronimo, 2012) which implies cheap education cost for those who intend to finish their education and acquire English language skills in the process. With the seemingly observed fact, it may be interesting to note that despite the availability of native speaker teachers in South Korea, there is a significant number of Koreans who take their formal schooling in an educational environment under the guidance of non-native speaking (NNS) Filipino teachers. It is then the current study’s aim to focus on the general perception of Korean learners in Manila toward non-native speaking teachers (Filipinos in the current study’s context), a factor which is considered vital in the learners’ language learning experience.

Language learning is said to be a complex cognitive process that various factors are believed to influence the facilitation of the learning process that has been a great deal of attention given to these factors such as motivation, anxiety and personality in order for teachers to understand the learners better. Chien (2010) stressed the importance of understanding the learners by means of the learning factors for teachers to develop teaching practices that could effectively aid the students in their learning process. Barnes and Lock (2013) suggest that using student evaluation may be an effective means to gather the learners’ views and opinions. However, Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi and Alzvari (2012) believe that to date, there is no known strategy that would best develop the learners in terms of their perceptions. According to Schacter (2011), perception deals with one’s interpretation through senses for better understanding of the environment.
In the context of sociolinguistics, students’ perceptions through what they experience in their learning are interpreted in order for teachers to understand them better. Particularly, an empirical study of student perceptions may be necessary since most of their evaluations on teachers and courses are confined to specific areas only, and that their perceptions on their learning experiences are usually sought at the latter part of a course; thus, there may be less opportunity to remedy the shortcomings in the learning process.

The students’ perception towards their teachers may be an area of concern in the field of language learning. Students and teachers are expected to work in a harmonious relationship for effective learning. Positive attitude may equate learning gains. But when both parties have differing views on some aspects of the classroom environment, students may develop doubt on their teacher’s efficacy (Barnes & Lock, 2013). In this regard, the current study focuses on the connection between the Filipino teachers and the Korean learners as reflected in the latter’s perception.

**Review of Related Literature**

Research on the attitude of students on the effectiveness of their teachers covers a plethora of contexts and procedures. For instance, Gorham and Christophel (1992) analyzed how teacher behavior acts as catalyst in motivating learners. It was found that negative behaviors of teachers play a huge role in demotivating the learners. In Lasagabaster and Serra (2002), 76 undergraduates answered questionnaires that sought their views about native English speaker teachers and non-native English speaker teachers during their primary, secondary and tertiary education. Based on the results, the students preferred native speakers in most areas. In cases that the NNS were preferred, there was equal preference for native speakers in the same area.

Furthermore, Moussu’s (2002 in Braine, 2005) study focused on feelings and expectations that students had when they were taught by NNS English teachers. Data showed that from the beginning of the semester, the students had positive attitudes towards their NNS teachers. It was notable, however, that the Korean and Chinese students expressed negative feelings toward their NNS teachers more frequently than other students. Moreover, Mahboob (2004) conducted a study that investigated the perception of
students taking intensive English classes in the United States toward their native English speaking teachers and non-native ones according to their strengths and weaknesses. It was found that the students look at their non-native English speaking teachers as their role models in the areas of grammar and moral support. On the other hand, the native English speaking teachers were better teachers in terms of oral communication skills and cultural resources. The study findings argued that the students have solid preference for either native English speaker teachers or non-native English speaker teachers.

In an attempt to broaden the findings on how students perceive their teachers among certain attributes that include competence in the target language and in language teaching, cultural and personal traits, teaching styles, and the classroom atmosphere the teachers establish, Kasai, Lee and Kim (2011) gathered more than 200 Japanese and Korean secondary level students studying in their respective countries. The study found that student perceptions about their native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers are contextual. Meanwhile, Barnes and Lock (2013) focused on what Korean university students perceive as an effective language teacher. The students appeared to prefer personality traits among the teacher attributes and seemed to have given priority to their teachers' delivery in class.

Overall, previous studies have indeed given considerable insights and have suggested a wide range of methods to explore language learner perceptions of students on their teachers. However, the widespread use of English is inevitable and this results in the migration of learners of various origins. One of which is the influx of Koreans to a NNS country such as the Philippines for English language learning purposes. Since teachers are vital in the learning process and that student perception about them is not to be discarded, it is considered that a study on the Philippine-based Korean education migrants’ perception on the teachers is timely.

**The Current Study**

The perception of students on their teacher comes in several variables such as target language skills, interpersonal skills, accent, and teaching methodology. Considering the dearth of studies documenting the diaspora among Koreans in the Philippines and the inconclusive and inconsistent
findings in previous studies of the same nature as well as the usefulness of studies that explore student perceptions, the present study focuses on Manila-based Korean students’ perceptions towards the overall efficacy of their NNS English language teachers, particularly Filipino teachers. In the context of the present study, teacher efficacy is the capacity of the teacher to affect student performance and that this can be measured by means of a likert-scale like that of the “RAND measure” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977 in Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998, p. 208). Specifically, despite the availability of native speakers in their country, it may be important to note how Korean learners perceive their Filipino teachers in terms of their learning experience in relation to other factors their goals and achieved proficiency. Adopting Lasagabaster and Sierra’s (2002) study, the present study intends to provide implications on the notion that native speaker teachers are believed to be more effective English teachers. In this regard, the current study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of perception of university students on non-native English teachers’ efficacy?

2. What is the level of perception of language academy students on non-native English teachers’ efficacy?

3. Is there a significant difference in the perception on non-native English teachers between university students and language academy students?

Methodology

Participants

Through convenience sampling, 69 Korean male and female learners studying in Manila were asked to participate in the study. The universities and language academies were chosen by the researchers due to accessibility and availability resulting from professional network. The participants were tapped based on the permission of the head of the school administration; hence, the number of participants in the four learning institutions varied. The learners whose ages ranged from 15 to 22 (Korean age) were conveniently selected in two universities and two language academies located in Manila. The varying range of the participants’ age
was due to the fact that there are those who come to the Philippines in any period during their middle school, high school and even tertiary level. In terms of the participants’ length of stay in Manila, majority of those who prefer to learn English in language academies stay in the Philippines for a relatively shorter length of time compared to the Philippine university students. For instance, South Koreans can stay for at least 30 days in the Philippines without visa. Meanwhile, a special student permit is issued to those below 18 years old who intend to study in the Philippines and a student visa is given to those who are 18 years old and older. Fifteen participants have stayed in the Philippines for less than a year while 45 have been staying in the said country between one to five years; twenty-two learners have been in the Philippines for more than five years. Most students from the language academies have stayed in the Philippines for one to three months for their summer vacation. They were mostly students in middle school and high school in Korea and their age range fall between 15 and 20. Due to the setting of the learning institutions, all the participants have been taught by at least one Filipino teacher in their English language learning courses. Also, it would be worth mentioning that 42 learners have had contact with native English speaking teachers prior to their education in the Philippines. Eighty participants were targeted by the researchers but only a total of 69 students came during the testing dates. Table 1 summarizes the profile of the participants.

Table 1. Distribution of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Institution</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University 2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>subtotal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Academy 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Academy 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>subtotal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= 69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instruments

A questionnaire adapted from the study of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) was used to gather the data of the current study. As part of modifying the instrument, the questionnaire was divided in two parts. The first part was divided into three clusters and had a total of 18 statements which required the participants to rate their overall preference for the type of teacher and rate their learning experience with Filipino teachers and their teachers’ attributes of effective language teaching on a five point scale from ‘1’ (strongly disagree) to ‘5’ (strongly agree). Specifically, this part of the questionnaire sought their overall perception towards non-native English speakers teaching English. In validating the perception of the learners on non-native teachers’ efficacy, items on their perception towards native speaking teachers and preference for both native and non-native speaking teachers were also added. Additionally, items on the students’ perception towards their teachers in their primary and secondary education which are found in Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) were omitted because the present study focuses only on the learners’ overall perception. The second part of the questionnaire sought the demographic information of the participants.

Procedure

The first consideration in undertaking the study is the validity of the instrument. In order to establish the validity of the instrument, modifications had to be made in order for the questions to be suitable for the context of the current study since Lasagabaster and Sierra’s (2002) study catered to Spanish students. Additionally, questions that sought information on the learners’ teachers in their primary, secondary and tertiary education were omitted since the study was intended to center on their general perception regardless of their educational level.

One measure considered was a pilot test among a different set of Korean learners. A pilot test was conducted among 15 Korean university students of different year level in another university in Manila. The questionnaire, which was written in English, was accomplished in less than 10 minutes. It was inquired whether there were ambiguous items in the questionnaire in which the students unanimously confirmed that fully understood everything. As it is, the comprehension of the learners pertinent to the
questionnaire items is crucial in the study in order to ascertain validity and acceptability of data.

For the test proper, the researchers coordinated with the respective academic division head of the four institutions to seek permission in conducting the study. Due to the help of researchers’ colleagues and the students’ availability, permission was granted a day after a letter of request was given. When the consent was issued, the schedule of the target participants were obtained from the concerned offices. The researchers talked to the teachers of the students to announce the testing date. One testing session was set for each institution. University 1 was scheduled on August 16 from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m.; university 2 had its session on the same day from 2:30 to 3:00 p.m. The researchers visited language academy 1 on the next day from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and the second language academy had its session that same day at 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. It is noteworthy to mention that the set up of language academies are not the same with the universities; hence, bringing together the participants was a challenge. The school administrators of the language academies gathered the students altogether in one classroom during the agreed testing time. The different sessions resulted in letting the students answer the questionnaire in batches.

The researchers spent at least ten minutes for each session in explaining the purpose of the activity and in giving instructions that the participants had to follow. On average, the testing sessions among the four institutions were finished in less than 20 minutes per batch. There were no questions or clarifications from the participants in all the testing sessions. The tabulation of the survey questionnaires and analysis of the tabulated data began three days after the last testing date.

Data Analysis

In describing and interpreting the data, frequency count, mean and standard deviation were used. The variables in the study include the students from the university and language academies and their perceptions obtained from the likert scale questionnaire. After the tabulation, mean scores and standard deviation were computed through Microsoft Excel. These variables were used to answer the respond to the overall objective and the first and second questions of the current study. The following were used to
interpret the scores as devised by the researchers: 4.21 to 5.00 - strongly agree; 3.41 to 4.20 - agree; 2.61 to 3.40 neutral; 1.81 to 2.60 - disagree; and 1.00 to 1.80 - strongly disagree.

A Paired T-test was used to determine if there was significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups with respect to questions that focus on the perception on the learners’ learning experience and teaching skills. The computation and analysis were performed through the SPSS through the help of a university statistician. The data were used to answer the current study’s third question.

**Results and Discussion**

The study aimed at determining the general perception of the Korean ESL learners towards their NNS teachers who teach them English specifically Filipino teachers. Table 2 shows which among native speakers, NNS and combination of the two are generally preferred by Korean students.

**Table 2. Student preference for teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference for Teachers</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Preference for Native Speakers</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Preference for Non-Native Speakers</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Preference for Native and Non-native Speakers</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that the Korean EFL learners studying in Manila have preference towards native speakers (mean= 4.08) over NNS (3.34). As can be seen in Table 2, the mean score shows the learners’ agreement in their preference for native speakers and neutrality in their preference for NNS. Surprisingly, despite studying in a country where almost all teachers are NNS, the learners appear to have less preference NNS as English teacher. The Koreans learners also showed more preference towards the combination of both native and NNS as their English teachers in comparison to their preference to non-native teachers.
With these findings, it can be said that the non-native Korean EFL learners appear to still believe in the stigma that native speakers are still the best teachers of English. These results may confirm that EFL learners demand native teachers for their English language development (Holliday, 2008). Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) mentioned that English language learners still have preference for native speakers despite their lack of qualifications. In the context of the current study, this belief may be influenced by the language planning of the learners’ respective government education agencies which are in-charge of their language learning programs. This is evident in the English language program of Korea through EPIK as it showed preference in hiring native speakers to assume the position of English teachers. The overall perceptions of the students of the present study appear to be parallel with the findings of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002). Non-native learners prefer native speakers as teachers and they would prefer NNS along with native speakers.

In answering the current study’s first question, the college students showed a generally identical perception on their learning experience with non-native teacher with the mean scores ranging from 3.31 to 3.94. Table 3 shows that among the items, the students agreed that their reading skill was the most developed skill with the guidance of their non-native teacher. Moreover, the students agree that non-native teachers aid in developing their spoken and pronunciation skills. The learners were neutral about their progress in the grammatical aspect of language learning. It may be worth mentioning that the responses of the students are spread as seen in the standard deviation, i.e. 0.91 to 1.59.

Table 3. University students’ perception on language learning experience with non-native English teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Attributes</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My grammar skills became better with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn more vocabulary with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My pronunciation became better with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 4, university students were consistent in their perception on their teachers with respect to their language teaching specific skills with mean scores ranging from 3.44 to 4.08. The students were consistent in agreeing that non-native teachers have generally good language teaching skills. Items on assessment of listening and reading skills of the students had the highest mean score. Moreover, the students were positive in saying that their teachers allow them to learn the culture of other nationalities. It can also be seen that the non-native teachers’ assessment of their students’ writing and grammar and provision of strategies for better language learning have almost identical rating from the students. Also, the responses of the students are somewhat spread as reflected in the standard deviation (SD = 0.83 to 1.21).

**Table 4. University Students’ perception towards Filipino teachers in terms of language teaching skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Teacher Attributes</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, non-native teachers give me more strategies/ideas to learn better</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers teach about the culture of other countries</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers provide help me have positive attitude towards learning English</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers are good in teaching listening.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers are good in teaching reading.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers are good in teaching speaking</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers are good in teaching writing</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers are good in teaching pronunciation</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers are good in teaching grammar</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second research question focuses on the perception of language academy students. Table 5 shows the students’ perception on their learning experience with non-native teachers. Generally, the students have almost uniform level of agreement on all items except on the development of their listening skills. Among the items in this cluster, the learners’ grammar skills and reading skills were regarded to have the most improvement under their learning experience with non-native teachers. Meanwhile, the standard deviation in this cluster shows the scattered distribution of the student responses.

Table 5. Language academy students’ perception on language learning experience with non-native English teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Attributes</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My grammar skills became better with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn more vocabulary with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My pronunciation became better with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My listening skills became better with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My reading skills became better with non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to speak more fluently because of my non-native teachers</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students from the language academies by and large have consistent agreement in terms of their teachers’ language teaching skills as seen in Table 6 with a mean score range of 3.33 to 4.24. In this cluster, the students strongly agreed on their teachers’ ability to assess their reading skills. Other teachers with almost identical rating include the teachers’ skill to evaluate student writing, grammar and the teachers’ knowledge of other countries’ culture. However, the students did not agree on the teachers’ skill to assess the students’ speaking skills. The responses of the students were also seen to be scattered as seen in the standard deviation ranging from 0.70 to 1.09.

The data presented in Table 6 show the almost homogeneous response of the students on their perception on their learning experience and their teachers’ language teaching skills. At the same time, the data somehow confirms and rejects the findings of previous studies on student perceptions. Firstly, the study confirms the native speaker fallacy that Philippson (1992, in Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002). It might be possible that the learners study in the Philippines but they still believe that native speakers would better aid in their language development. This could be part of their culture since there are a considerable number of native speakers who teach English in South Korea.

Table 6. Language academy students’ perception towards Filipino teachers in terms of language teaching skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Teacher Attributes</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, non-native teachers give me more strategies/ideas to learn better</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers teach about the culture of other countries</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers provide help me have positive attitude towards learning English</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native teachers are good in teaching listening</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-native teachers are good in teaching reading. 4.24 0.90
Non-native teachers are good in teaching speaking 3.33 0.89
Non-native teachers are good in teaching writing 3.94 0.70
Non-native teachers are good in teaching pronunciation 3.52 1.00
Non-native teachers are good in teaching grammar 3.79 0.89

Although the mean scores in the students’ responses were interpreted to generally agree to most items. For instance, both groups had almost identical scores on the teachers’ efficacy in terms of reading. The results for both support Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) and Mahboob (2004)’s findings that non-native speaking teachers excel in teaching and assessing the learners’ reading skills. In this regard, non-native teachers in the context of the study may strengthen the notion that teaching reading is one of their strong areas. Another item worth discussing is the perception of the learners in the teachers’ skills in teaching speaking. Both groups were neutral in rating the said aspect of language teaching. This finding supports Medgyes’ (1994) findings that teachers have self-reported concerns in teaching speaking. The findings can also be in agreement to Walkinshaw and Duong’s (2012) scholarly output about English non-native language teachers in Vietnam when their linguistic fluency was perceived to be an area of concern for learners. This aspect of language teaching may reflect the students’ ratings with a perception that non-native teachers may lack skills in the said department due to accent and it is apparently one of the learners’ concerns. Although Kirkpatrick (2010 in Walkinshaw & Duong (2012) suggests that non-native teachers’ spoken skills are ideal for use in global communication, the students still put emphasis to it.

The university students and language academy students also gave a relatively lower rating in the teachers’ ability to provide positive learning attitude with a mean score of 3.39 and 3.36, respectively. Although the numbers are interpreted as neutral and that there was no significant difference found, the mean scores were fairly lower compared to other teaching skills. This implies that non-native teachers may need to further develop their skills in motivating the students to do better in their language learning objectives.
While the students were in agreement with their perception on the assessing reading and speaking skills, the students had varying mean scores in other areas. Though there is no significant difference, university students agreed (mean=3.58) that their listening skills improved, their perception that their teachers assess their listening skills was relatively higher (mean= 4.08). Language academy students, on the other hand, did not agree in saying that their listening skills improved (mean= 3.30). However, they agree that their teachers are able to assess their listening skills. It is possible that the students consider their teachers’ assessment of their listening skills to be effective, but their listening skills have not fully developed. This could be due to the absence of concentration on listening in the classroom activities since listening is integrated in other activities on language development. With these findings, Butler (2007) suggests a more systematic research to understand which elements of non-native teachers’ linguistic skills may affect student comprehension skills and the underlying mechanism of how this occurs.

Furthermore, in other items, both groups perceive their teachers at varying rate though no significant difference was drawn. A possible reason may be the different context of each participant. It may be wise to note that the students have been exposed to different teachers. Their rated perception may be influenced by a single or seemingly notable experience with a non-native teacher. Thus, the perception of a student on a teacher may not be considered general.

The study’s third question sought to determine the significant difference in the overall perception of university and language academy students with respect to their learning experience and their teacher’s language teaching skills. As shown in Table 7, there is no significant difference (p<.05) between the perception of university students and language academy students on their teachers. The perception of the students in terms of their learning experience did not differ significantly with a t-value of 0.777. Likewise, students’ perception on their teachers’ language teaching skills did not have significant difference (t-value = 0.686).
Table 7. Difference in the perception of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VAR00001</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.05628</td>
<td>1.13048</td>
<td>.19679</td>
<td>-.45713</td>
<td>.34457</td>
<td>-.286</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR00002</td>
<td>VAR00003</td>
<td>.06439</td>
<td>.90793</td>
<td>.15805</td>
<td>-.38633</td>
<td>.25754</td>
<td>-.407</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.686</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The non-significant difference in the perception of students on non-native teachers supports Barnes and Lock’s (2013) findings. It appears that Korean students have identical views on non-native teachers despite the type of learning institution they are enrolled in. It can be noted that universities have a more formal system of education compared to language academies. Teachers in language academies have more opportunities to establish interpersonal relationship with their students which could be one important factor in creating a positive image for the students, thus the reflection of the students’ perception. On the other hand, teachers in universities may be more structured and that the students are geared to undergo strict and rigid training. Consequently, their gains in their language development and other areas of learning could contribute to the establishment of a positive attitude towards their non-native teachers. Another factor that can be mentioned is that students may have gone to the Philippines due to the will of their parents in order to spend less on their children’s’ education. It is possible that Korean parents send their children to other countries like the Philippines because of the comparatively cheaper tuition and fees.
Conclusion

The current study was motivated by the importance of understanding the students to facilitate better learning. It examined how Korean EFL learners in two universities and two language academies in Manila perceived their non-native speaking teachers who teach English. Specifically, it sought to obtain information about the learners’ general perception on their teachers as reflected in their preferences and on the teachers’ language teaching skills. It also aimed to compare the perception of the Korean learners in terms of four sociolinguistic factors that include length of stay in Manila, type of academic institution they are enrolled in, exposure and non-exposure to native speakers as English teachers, and their perceived achieved proficiency.

Overall, the study partially supported previous studies that document strengths and weaknesses of the non-native teachers based from non-native students’ perspectives. It also supported previous findings that students generally prefer native speakers over NNS as teachers of English. It appears that the foreigners do not come to the Philippines due to their belief that Filipino teachers are the best teachers for their English language development. The phenomenon can be caused by economic reasons as the parents of the Korean learners decide on the matter. In terms of the Korean learners’ learning experience, Filipino teachers are also said to excel in teaching reading. On the other hand, Filipino teachers are said to need improvement in developing the listening skills of the Korean students and in providing learning strategies.

The perception of the learners towards their teachers may be a challenging task especially on the part of Filipinos. The traditional notion that native speakers are the best possible teachers of English may still be inculcated in the minds of the learners due to the native speaker fallacy. The perception of the learners may change if they notice apparent improvement in their English language skills. Additional training on teaching foreigners may be necessary for teachers who handle such students. In addition, the teachers might have to increase their knowledge of managing mixed ability classes, especially those in universities, in order to give equal attention to the needs and progress of the learners.
For future research, it may be interesting to explore other areas of research on student perception in terms of non-native teachers’ teaching style and the learners’ learning styles and achieved and perceived English proficiency. Studies on such areas may benefit the teachers and ultimately the learners since the learners’ perception should be taken seriously to facilitate better language acquisition. Additionally, a focus group discussion among the researchers and random participants may be conducted to qualitatively verify the validity of the responses of the participants in the current study.

References


The Impact of Blogging among SQU Students

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of blogging on students' general performance. It mainly focuses on the effect of blogging on students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills. To collect the data, a questionnaire was distributed among 25 students within Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). The ages of most participants were between 19-26 years old. This paper argues that universities’ and schools’ teachers should give the students a chance to blog and share their writing by offering them special educational courses in order to get benefitted from blogging.

Keywords: Blogging, technology, students, knowledge, critical reflection, writing skills

Introduction

Due to the rapid development of technology over the last decade, the life of the new generation, especially students, has changed. The development of internet and web 2.0 technologies has allowed leaners of different ages to access the World Wide Web. Blogs are one of the most popular web tools. According to Vurdien (2011), blogs are: “online [journals] which can be continuously updated by [their] users” (p, 1). Because technologies have always been very popular amongst teenagers, Hurlbut (2008, as cited in Ariffin & Yaacob, 2014) suggests that teachers take advantage of these technologies and use them in the field of education to enhance students’ various educational skills. Interestingly, Vurdien (2011) points out that the number of people who use blogs for educational purposes has increased lately. Studies show that people use blogs for several reasons; one is to get more feedback from larger audience not only from their instructors as well as to communicate and collaborate with others (Ariffin & Yaacob, 2014). Blogs also enhance students’ writing skills as they learn new phrases and avoid spelling mistakes as Lin, Groom, and Lin (2013) declare. The central
The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of blogging on SQU students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills.

The study stems from the author’s interest in writing in examining the effects of blogging on SQU students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills for a number of reasons. First, many students at the university lack the support and the criticism on their intellectual productions outside classroom. Second, students have little experience in integrating technologies in their study. Thus, the findings of the study will enable students to understand whether blogging is going to enhance their knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills or otherwise. Additionally, since we are living in the era of modern technology, using technologies in the academic fields and examining their effects on students are very significant.

Blogging is seen by many scholars to be a beneficial tool outside the classroom in developing student’s educational skills. It is claimed that blogging enhances academic skills, writing skills and vocabulary (Lin et al., 2013). Vurdien (2011) also claims that blogging has positive effects on students’ academic skills. Both studies suggest that students become more concerned about avoiding spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes.

Blogs not only have positive effects on students’ writing but also on their critical reflection. It has been pointed out that there is positive relationship between blogging and critical reflection (Farmer, Yue, & Brooks, 2008; Ferdig & Trammel, 2004; Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Lin et al., 2013). In fact, blogging can be seen as an ongoing feedback from the readers. Furthermore, Vurdien (2011) indicates that feedback from others is very useful, motivational and beneficial because the blogger focuses more on his or her writings and develops it. Also, by commenting on others and receiving a variety of comments and views, students shape their own identities, thoughts and points of view.

Although studies prove the effectiveness of blogging on students’ writing skills and critical reflection, none of them focuses on the Arab world. Because of the differences between cultures and educational environments, the effects of the blogging on Arab students may differ. As a result, it is necessary to examine the effects of blogging on Omani students and SQU students in particular.
Review of Related Literature

Due to the rapid development of technology over the last decade, the life of the new generation, especially students, has changed. The development of Internet and web 2.0 technologies has allowed learners of different ages to access the World Wide Web. Blogs are one of the most popular web tools. According to Vurdien (2011) blogs are: “online [journals] which can be continuously updated by [their] users” (p.1). Because technology has always been very popular amongst teenagers, Hurlbut (2008) suggests that teachers should take advantage of these technologies, and use them in the field of education to enhance students’ various educational skills (cited in Ariffin & Yaacob, 2014). Interestingly, Vurdien (2011) points out that the number of people who use blogs in order to learn has increased and blogging effects positively on their performance. The level of learning grows not only for those who write or share things, but also as Ellison Wu (2006) and Nonnecke and Preece (2001, as cited in Van Wyk, 2012,) say that individuals “who read but do not necessarily participate in the online discussion may still be learning through their passive or vicarious participation” (p.5). However, the findings of a many studies view blogging as a beneficial tool to develop students' various educational skills.

The Negative Effects of Blogging

The results of the study conducted by Lin et al. (2013) show that blogging can be seen as a positive and negative tool in the educational field. It is said that blogging develops various educational skills like personal characteristics and writing skills. However, the study views blogging as a negative tool in learning new languages. Study findings show that blogging is not an effective tool to learn foreign vernaculars for several reasons such as anxiety about peers’ reaction towards their intellectual work and concerns regarding mockery as a result of mistakes resulting in embarrassment negatively affecting their identities.

Lin et al. (2013) also indicate that blogging is not a promising tool for improving students’ writing skills, especially writing in foreign languages, since students take very long time to finish a blog then post it while they have other things to do. One English participant says that he feels too busy to post entries in English. Another student claims that “revising an English entry takes ages” (p. 134). Several participants also revealed that they do
not benefit from others’ feedback because they are written in English, which they do not understand very clearly. They add that sometimes they do not comment on others’ work because they do not understand what they write in English. For instance, a participant from the same study states that she sometimes has “no idea about what to feedback, because it has to be done in English” (p.134). This could mean that not commenting on others’ writing does not assist bloggers to build a good relationship with their followers.

**The Benefits of Blogging**

There are studies that prove the effectiveness of using blogging on students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills. For instance, Ariffin and Yaacob (2014) show that being a blogger encourages students to read more about the topic they want to share as well as the usage of the language in order to vary their style when blogging. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Yang (2009) regarding the improvement that students achieve in terms of their knowledge. Yang suggested that bloggers develop crucial features that are basic in every learning process such as communication skills, confidence, self-esteem, critical analysis and positive curiosity. Because of globalization and the vast amount of information, such features are essential to distinguish between creditable and useful information and between fake and unproven information.

Furthermore, Ellison and Wu’s (2008) work corroborates with previous findings regarding enriching students’ knowledge. It was found that blogging assists the study participants in understanding things better for reasons like sense of responsibility of sharing exclusive information for their followers and the sense of choice freedom of reading anything and posting any time.

Studies like that of Yang (2009) underscore positive effects of using blogs in learning a second language. In the said study, non-English participants describe their English level to have improved as a result of ease of access to their blogs which are written in English. Consequently, they notice that they avoid grammatical and vocabulary errors. Meanwhile, Lin et al.’s work (2013) reveals that blogging is a way to increase students’ awareness about the language in which they learn new English phrases and get an idea
about the usage of the language and the various styles of writing. Also, Van Wyk (2012) assures the positive effects of blogging on students’ learning experience as they try to learn new information and then share them on their blogs; this enriches their level of learning since it provides chance to learn new things. Bloggers tend to be aware of the recent news or information that happen in the world to exchange with others, which results in having a high learning level. In addition, researchers point out that peer feedback can assist in improving students learning level as they tend to write pieces of writing with no faults, so blog commenters do not laugh at their work.

All in all, blogging is seen by several scholars as a means to improve student learning level. Noticeably, a blogger’s knowledge is enhanced and they become more aware of various new events or information after posting on blogs. Also, they learn more about the language grammatical rules and various writing styles.

**Blogging enhances critical reflection**

Critical reflection means descriptive, analytical, and critical comments in written form orally or through artistic expressions (The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, n.d). Peer feedback on reflection helps individuals to develop important aspects such as knowledge, relationship with others and personal qualities.

Vurdien (2012) found that comments from others promote students’ knowledge. Bloggers benefit from others comments, take them seriously and learn from them. Further, a participant from Lin et al. (2013) states that she respects others’ comments on her writings and she considers them important guidance; especially when the comments are about the usage of the language. Furthermore, students tend to avoid negative criticisms on their mistakes by focusing more deeply on their writings to avoid spelling, grammar, punctuation and other language mistakes. As a result, bloggers learn new words and expressions to use and vary their style of writing. Apart from the aforementioned, scholars also demonstrate that bloggers gain positive features as a result of others’ feedback. In particular, Yang’s study (2009) proves the positive change on the bloggers’ identity as they actively tend to discuss, interact, share, ask and challenge others. The reason behind this tendency is the absence of administrators; they feel a
sense of freedom and independence, which encourage them to elaborate and discover themselves.

Additionally, critical reflection can help in building intimate and respectful relationships between bloggers and their readers. Van Wyk (2012) suggests that blogs provide a useful platform for reflecting and communicating with each other. Students become more social and tolerant aside from accepting others openly. According to Churchill (2009), Yang (2009), Killeavy and Moloney (2010) and Van Wyk (2012), blogs are effective medium for creating a community between bloggers and their audience as they actively communicate with each other.

Overall, studies consider blogs as a beneficial tool in developing students’ critical reflection. For example, blogs improve students’ knowledge about things and about the usage of language as they learn to vary the styles and focus on their writing so they do not make mistakes that others would ridicule. Also, blogs are seen as positive tools in enhancing student identities and connecting bloggers with their audiences.

**Blogs and students’ writing skills**

Several scholars consider blogging as a valuable method that assists students in developing various writing skills. The benefits of blogging can be perceived before the process of writing, during the process of writing, in learning new languages and in building the sense of authorship. For instance, Sun and Chang (2012) discovered that blogging helps students to enhance several important ways which are essential before starting the process of writing. In the same way, Vurdien’s (2011) findings, consider the positive essential skills that must be gained before writing. The participants of the study reported that they can plan tasks in a short time and that blogging allows them to think deeply and critically and write things creatively in new styles. The two main reasons behind the effectiveness of using blogs in developing students’ writing are there are no limitations of time and space, which allows them to think more before typing unlike traditional classrooms where they have limited time, and they have sense of freedom that bloggers feel helps them choose the topic they like and express it creatively.
It was also found that bloggers’ writing level improves greatly. Vurdien (2011) reports that the participants become more concerned with avoiding spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes, style and acquisition of new words to use. According to Sun, and Chang (2012), to avoid discomfiture, students tend to concentrate while writing. Students say that they learn several new grammatical rules; likewise, they declare that they are willing to correct their accidental mistakes that others comment on (Vurdien, 2011). In fact, by this ongoing process of focusing when writing, students gradually learn things and their writing style develops.

**Benefits of blogging in learning new language**

Studies which looked into the relationship between using blogs and enhancing students writing in a second language, prove the positive connection between the two. Yang (2009) shows that the English pieces of writing of non-English students have improved. The participants say that because everyone can access and read their writing in English, they have to write carefully to avoid mistakes. Vurdien (2011) likewise found the same as a participant stated that blogging helps her review some words she studied in the past and helps her learn expressions and phrases she knows but with lack of familiarity in usage.

**Blogs and the sense of authorship**

The results of several studies, which aimed to explore the relationship of blogs and the sense of authorship, prove that blogs affect positively on authorship. For instance, Sun and Chang (2012) show that blogs can promote a sense of authorship and editorship and that blogs are fully controlled by their owners, who freely write everything they desire. Further, it was indicated that blogs reinforce self-expression and self-reflection as students express their feeling, ideas and beliefs.

**Synthesis**

In general, studies show that blogging has positive impacts on students. However, there seem to be limited studies on the Arab community. Because of the differences between cultures and educational environments, the effects of blogging on Arab students may differ. As a result, it is necessary to examine the effects of blogging on Omani students and SQU students in particular. Thus, in order to obtain more valid and accurate data
about the effects of blogging on Omani students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills, this study offers a clearer image of effect of blogging on the Omani students.

**Data and data collection**

Questionnaires were distributed to 25 Omani students, between 19-26 years old, within SQU’s different colleges. The questionnaire consisted of four types of questions dealing with three main aspects. The first section’s concern was on the effect of blogging on students’ learning level as it investigated the level of awareness of various things that students may reach when blogging. It focused on various main points such as learning a new language, reading about the usage of the language and knowing the world news. Moreover, this part’s target was also to examine the effect of blogging on student identity and personality; especially after learning and sharing different materials. In addition, this section also tested students’ ability of searching more about new topics to share with their followers.

The second part of the questionnaire aimed to investigate the relationship between blogging and critical reflection. The section studied whether commenting and receiving comments developed students’ critical analysis. Also, the section tested whether blogging, by offering chances to communicate with different types of audience, assisted in enhancing crucial features such as confidence, self-esteem, critical analysis and positive curiosity. This part was meant to measure the effect of negative comments on students’ performance and analyse the nature of relationship between bloggers and their readers.

The third part aimed to measure the effects of blogging on students’ writing skills. This section’s target was to investigate whether blogging helped students to learn new vocabulary, grammar rules and expressions. Most importantly, this section intended to examine if blogging helped in having the sense of authorship and editorship. Because blogs are considered a record for bloggers’ writing, this part was meant to know whether bloggers become aware of their mistakes and are able to avoid them.

The last section consisted of three open-ended questions which attempted to explore other advantages of blogging. The section aimed to find the
ways by which blogging helped students in learning a new language in which it inferred if bloggers had built a sense of authorship or editorship.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts and personal information. The participants were asked to answer four questions concerning academic information, gender, and information about the time they have spent on blogging. Majority of the participants were females in their third, fourth or fifth year of being university students. Moreover, most of the members started blogging when they joined SQU except for two participants. Furthermore, the majority of the students declared that they blog three to 10 times per month while three students confirmed that they blog daily.

The Yes/No part was made of seven questions whose aim was to know whether blogging help students to read and search more about several topics to share. Around 21 participants claimed that they are “writing through blogs helps me to read more about different topics.” There were 18 students who said that they “read more about the usage of language to vary my style.” This part of the questionnaire also measured the students’ ability of seeking for more information to share. For instance, one of the statements regarding this matter was “I am willing to search about new topics to share.” Out of the 25 participants, only three said that they did not search before writing and two students said that they did not know.

The other central focus of this part was whether blogging helped students to read more about the usage of the language, especially its grammar rules and structures. The results regarding these foci were quite positive as one of the statements was “I read more about the usage of language to vary my style.” Almost all students claimed to have awareness of it and four students said that they did not read about the usage of language. In contrast, around 19 participants stated that they read about language grammar and syntax as they try to learn from them. Consequently, the blogs are seen as tools to develop strong personality as all the 25 participants said that blogging assisted them to develop their identity and assisted them to gain positive features such as confidence, self-esteem, critical analysis and positive curiosity.

The final section was about learning a new language. Seven students said that blogging helps them to learn new language vocabulary, grammar and
There were 17 students who said that blogging was a useful tool in learning new languages.

The second part of the questionnaire which is an agreement scale type comprised of seven items, which aimed to investigate the relationship between blogging and students’ critical reflection. This part focused on the effect of commenting and receiving comments on students' identity and critical reflections. The majority of the respondents agreed that blogging helped them to develop strong identity. There were 17 students who said that they get feedback from a large number of people by blogging. However, five members were neutral to the statement and three claimed that they did not get feedback from a larger number of people. Moreover, the respondents proved that they received other’s comments openly. Overall, it appears that the majority tended to accept other people’s feedback even if the comments are negative.

The concern of the third part of the questionnaire which was a rating scale in nature was to find the effects of using blog for students’ writing skills. The respondents were asked to answer seven questions. The said questions focused on the improvement of writing skills through blogs and increased awareness on errors. The result proves that the bloggers’ writing improve as they become more aware of their mistakes and that they tend to avoid them. The results also showed that students plan for their writing before starting. The last intention of this section was the sense of authorship, and there were 11 respondents who felt that they had a sense of authorship.

In the fourth part of the questionnaire, which has open-ended questions, the students were asked to answer questions about general information regarding blogging. The questions concern the different advantages of blogging such as developing writing skills, enhancing memory, building relationship, letting go of emotions and removing stress.

The second focus of this section was on the sense of authorship. There were students who shared how blogging has led to the publication of a book. Another participant was excited about a short novel that was about to be published. Further, there was a student who was hired as a writer in a newspaper.

The last questions that the students were asked to answer were about the kinds of assistance that blogging gives in relation to learning a new
language. One of the participants said that she was interested in writing in multiple languages and another participant indicated that writing in a new language attracts readers from different nationalities. As most of the students noted that learning new languages through blogs might take long time, it can be deduced that blogs help in the process of learning. For example, a student insisted that one day she would be able to write a whole article in English, her second language.

**Findings and discussion**

The first aim was to discover the effects of blogging on students’ knowledge. The results show that blogging can serve as a tool which increases students’ learning level as the majority of the participants stated that they read more about various topics before blogging. Also, they say that they tend to read more about the usage of the language such as its rules and syntax so they can vary their styles. Interestingly, the results of this study prove that being bloggers, the students’ ability of searching about exclusive topics to share increased. Furthermore, all stated that by blogging, they develop their identity as they feel confident. Because of reading and learning new information or others’ experiences, they feel that they develop some positive features such as critical analysis and positive curiosity. In fact, the results of this study are similar with the results of a survey conducted by Ariffin and Yaacob (2014). The two studies show that blogging encourages students to read more about the topic they want to share as well as about the usage of the language in order to vary their style when blogging.

Significantly, the results of this study regarding learning new language are different compared to the results of the study conducted by Lin et al. (2013). It is claimed that blogging is not an effective tool to learn foreign vernaculars for students as they become more worried that others would laugh and mock their accidental mistakes. Also, students feel embarrassed when people comment negatively on their work, so they may stop blogging to avoid negative comments. However, the results of this study show the opposite as the majority of the participants say that they receive other’s comments openly even if they are negative comments and they say that sometimes the negative comments push them to improve themselves. Respondents of this study affirm that they their identities become stronger and they become more confident when blogging.
In addition, Lin et al. (2013) findings show that learning a new language through blogging is not easily achieved. The students say that learning a new language is difficult and using blogs does not seem to make it easier. In contrast, the members of this survey declare that they start to learn new vocabulary and expressions of new language. Some of them believe that they will be able to write articles in another language eventually. One of the students from this survey denotes that she used to write in many languages and she says “blogging helps me to write in English and share; especially that I am English specialist students.” In addition to this, participants of this study believe that by following bloggers who write in foreign languages, they will benefit through obtaining ideas about the usage of the language. In fact, the results of the current study support Yang’s (2009) since both of the studies found that non-English participants describe their English level to have improved.

Critical reflection

The other concern of the survey is to show the effect of blogging on students’ critical reflection. The results of this study demonstrate that blogging helps in building intimate and respectful relationships between bloggers and their readers. There is a positive connection between bloggers and their readers; some of the respondents declare that when they comment on each other, they feel that they are real friends. Also, students say that getting feedback from a larger number of audience affect positively their identity. This encourages them more to write and develop their writing skills. Interestingly, the findings of this survey are consistent with the results of a study by Vurdien (2012). Both studies found that students benefit from others’ comments. Also, students indicate that they learn new vocabulary and expressions from either their commenter or other bloggers. Furthermore, this finding is similar to the findings of Yang’s study (2009). They prove that there is a positive change on the bloggers’ identity, especially, if the students actively discuss, interact, share, ask and challenge others.

Writing skills

The findings of the survey demonstrate that blogging positively affects students’ writing skills as students affirm that they learn new grammatical rules, new vocabulary and expressions to influence their writing styles.
Also by blogging, students tend to plan before writing, which is a very important step before writing. These findings are congruent with Sun and Chang (2012) and Vurdien (2011). The studies prove that students develop their writing by regular writing as they tend to avoid spelling and grammatical errors. The sense of freedom of writing anything at any time and the absence of administrations are the reasons behind the development on their writing skills.

Significantly, some participants of the survey declare that blogging gives the sense of authorship. One of the participates says that “my readers wait for my writing as they daily ask me to post, which gives me the feeling of responsibility…. Moreover, I am about to publish my book, which is a collection of articles that I have already shared on my blog and my followers liked them.” These findings are similar to Sun and Chang’s (2012) results which show that blogs can promote a sense of authorship and editorship.
Conclusion

Because technology has always been very popular amongst teenagers, Hurlbut (2008) suggests that teachers should take the advantage of these technologies, and use them in the field of education to enhance students’ various educational skills. Blogs are one of the most popular websites which allow users to share their post with people from the world. Although lots of studies have examined the effects of blogging on student educational performance, there is scarcity of studies focused the Arab world. Thus, this current study was designed to demonstrate the effect of blogging on SQU students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills.

The findings of the study suggest that blogging is a beneficial tool in developing students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills. Additionally, blogging affects positively the learners’ learning level as students tend to read more about various topics so the themes of what they post can vary. Furthermore, the results prove that bloggers enhance positive features such as confidence and positive curiosity.

Another major finding is that students who blog regularly develop their critical reflection. For instance, they seem to receive others’ comments positively even if they sound negative. Some of the respondents indicate that negative feedback impulse them to work hard to avoid such comments. In fact, commenting and receiving comments strengthens their personality and helps them in building relationship with readers. Another important finding is that blogging affects various writing skills such as avoiding spelling and grammatical errors. Also, students tend to learn different styles to vary their writing. Furthermore, blogging promotes a sense of authorship and editorship. As one of the students from this survey said, she is about to publish a collection of her journals that she has posted in her blog and a number of people commented.

Additionally, blogs help in learning a new language. In fact, regular writing helps in learning new words, expressions and grammar. Accordingly, commenting or reading others’ work which is written in another language helps bloggers to get an idea about the usage of the languages.
Indeed, this study has undergone some limitations. The findings of the study might not be generalized due to the limited number of participants. The reasons behind the small number of participant is that there is difficulty in finding real Omani bloggers who blog regularly because the majority of the bloggers write and share their work in normal social applications or newspaper which apparently does not allow others to comment on their work. Time constraints also prevented the author from seeking for a bigger number of bloggers in all universities. Hence, further research should be done with more number of bloggers from both genders.

The findings of this study have a number of future implications for future practice. In order to benefit from technology to enhance students’ knowledge, critical reflection and writing skills, the family and the Ministry of Education through educators need to encourage students to blog. The family should motivate the children to be confident and share with people what they write. Through blogging, the children not only will write and share, but they will also read more and learn from others’ experiences.

Also, the schools and universities should give the students the opportunity to blog by giving them courses. For example, at SQU, there are courses in which students are asked to write several literary writings, such as a course called Creative Writing offered by English Department in The College of Arts and Social Sciences. Thus, asking the students to post their work on blogs will be beneficial to both the students and the teacher. With this, the teachers will get an idea about students’ writing. Also the students will develop some educational skills as well as have the sense of authorship. They will also benefit from others’ comments which will enable them to edit their work before submitting it so they do not lose huge marks.

References


Feminine, Feminist and Female: A Gynocritique of “Standing Female Nude” -Perspectives in Pedagogy-

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Abstract

Critical interpretations of creative texts are hugely influenced by the title of the work and the name of the poet tagged onto it. In pedagogic praxis, this may lead to the stabilization of certain meanings which fix the poem within a stereotypical framework. Carol Ann Duffy’s “Standing Female Nude” that demands an inevitable reading from a feminist perspective. The feminist critical interpretation is endorsed by the poet being a female and the words in the title, ‘female’ and ‘nude’. Functioning as a canonical text prescribed in the syllabus of English Literature courses, the poem may seem to stagnate within stereotyped interpretations of victimization. This paper attempts to read the poem from its inevitable feminist perspective, while moving beyond to elucidate the working of Elaine Showalter’s ‘feminine’, ‘feminist’ and ‘female’ theoretical categories in Duffy’s “Standing Female Nude”. The paper looks at how the reading of the poem against Picasso’s painting and Showalter’s critical essay envisages the creative and critical significance of the poem.

Keywords: Carol Ann Duffy; Standing Female Nude; Pedagogy; Gynocriticism; Nude; Gaze; Male Gaze; Art; Cubism; Feminism

Working with literary texts in the English classroom can make a considerable contribution ... to inspiring critical thinking, which is inherent to a critical reading of a fictional work. (Bobkina and Steffanova “Literature and Critical Literacy Pedagogy in the EFL Classroom: Towards a model of teaching Critical skills”)

From ardent literature patrons who recited Wordsworth and Keats from memory for their students, to I.A. Richards who flaunted with the idea of Practical Criticism in his classes, poetry has always been a much preferred
genre - both for teaching and experimenting. On the other hand, learning poetry has always been interesting classroom praxis of decoding meanings – an experience that gives the pleasure of solving puzzles.

With active reader-response approaches to the text, the dimensions of a poem widen when ‘opened out’ in class. It is interesting to note how, in the process of decoding meanings, a wide range of new meanings are created by learners even from a highly subjective experience in a poem. Many times, fresh perspectives that emerge during reader-response alter the teacher-facilitator’s approach to a text. A teacher is able to observe how the dynamics and methodology of teaching the same poem have altered down the years with different groups of learners. Years of experimentation with the poem leaves the teacher with a collage of critical perspectives on the text. Carol Ann Duffy’s “Standing Female Nude” is one such text that lends its ‘self’ to newer interpretations with every reading.

In her article, “‘Me not know what these people mean’: Gender and National Identity in the Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy”, Angelia Michelis notes:

Apart from the rather difficult and complex relationship between lived (female) experience and poetic discourse, poetry written by women during the last two decades is at its most interesting where it interweaves different, and sometimes contradictory, aspects of subjectivity in order to question the notion of a stable, fixed self....(Michelis and Rowland 81)

Michelis observes how the poetry emerging during the 1980s served as a “discursive space” which laid “bare the process of identity construction”. This essence in the later-twentieth-century poetry can be best illustrated with the works of Britain’s first Scottish poet-laureate, Carol Ann Duffy.

Carol Ann Duffy’s poem “Standing Female Nude” is a monologue by a female model who is posing nude for a painting. The poem begins with a tone of tediousness as the model has been standing, “six hours like this for a few francs” (1). The artist, Georges, is a genius who “drains the colour” (3) from the model to possess her on canvass. Even as she poses, the model anticipates reactions to her nude painting. When hung in great museums, the middle class people, with their adherence to religious and moral standards will not openly appreciate the painting. Not intending to be heard, they would murmur in hushed-up tones their secret admiration of
the nudity. The model also visualizes/ foresees the Queen of England looking intently on the “shape” of her body and acknowledging the painting as “magnificent” (13).

The painter, who makes his living through art, is serious about his profession. He takes great care while he paints and is concerned with “volume, space” (8) of his ‘object’. Though extremely professional, there are times when he is distracted by the nudity of the model and he “stiffens for her warmth” (19-20). Unable to possess her physically, he rules her body in his painting. Sneering at his lust, the model feels, “Little man! You’ve not the money for the arts I sell” (20). Being poor herself, the model also empathizes with the artist who is struggling to make ends meet through his low-paid painting profession. At nights, the model turns into a pole dancer, drinking and relieving herself from the tediousness and boredom of the laborious task of having stood still for hours together. The poem ends with the proud artist asking for the model’s opinion on his painting. But covering herself with a shawl, the model disinterestedly says, “It does not look like me” (28). Charging twelve francs for her labour, she leaves casually.

**Artistic Traditions and Mainstream Patriarchy**

The title “Standing Female Nude” and its context would demand an inevitable reading of the poem from a feminist perspective. It can be read as resistance against the (mis)representation of women by the patriarchal artistic traditions which reduce women into mere ‘objects’. The body of the female model, her “belly, nipple and arse” (2) become objects for the artist to represent and display. The artist directs her on how to pose and controls her movements and is distracted by the model’s physical movements while he is concentrating to capture her ‘exactly’ in a live painting. He expects her to stand completely still and even a slight movement from her - a movement which he does not desire - disturbs him. The poem becomes a metaphor of women’s experience in all artistic and literary traditions. The artist - the metaphoric gatekeeper of patriarchy - is disturbed when the ‘female’ model ‘moves’ away from the mainstream, thereby voicing herself differently. The woman is permitted to be present in the mainstream tradition only when she allows herself to be ‘carved’ or ‘painted’ by patriarchy. Any woman’s representation of herself too has to imitate patriarchal standards or be endorsed by patriarchal values. Even a
slight ‘movement’ or protest from women, in their roles as ‘objects’ or as artists, would disturb the ideologies of patriarchy causing rupture in the mainstream tradition. Just as the artist curbs the activity of the model and instructs her to repose in the position he desires, artistic traditions have silenced/negated women’s protests and differences. Down the ages, patriarchal images of women have become stereotypes in artistic traditions.

The painter ‘arrests’ her and images her in a way in which he wants to portray her for posterity, as opposed to her willingness for action which she demonstrates after her work by pole-dancing. Her dancing at nights is her conscious physical movements that symbolize her protest against the restricted posture in which the artist has controlled her for several hours. She relieves herself from the power exercised over her by the artist.

Encoding a Female Gaze

In a Lacanian context, the term ‘gaze’ is generally understood as the look which makes an individual uncomfortable and conscious of oneself. The gaze of the society makes individuals conscious of being watched which thereby leads to the shaping of their characters and identities. In this sense, the ‘male-gaze’ makes a female feel shy and uncomfortable with her body thereby making her conscious. The poem reflects this concept of the ‘male gaze’ - a concept put forth by the feminist film critic, Laura Mulvey in her essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. The male gaze refers to looking at a female from the male-viewpoint. It ‘commodifies’ the female body into a pleasure-giving object to the patriarchal eyes of the beholder. The ‘male-gaze’ does not only represent the female body from the patriarchal perspective but alienates and ‘others’ her from her own body. “Gazing” (12) on the shape of the model’s body, the Queen of England demonstrates this ‘male gaze’ of her nation. The image of the Queen of England does not represent her gender but the patriarchal ways in which both the sexes ‘other’ the female body. The artists’ representation of the model from his male gaze makes the model’s body strange to her ‘self’.

She feels distanced from herself and is not able to identify herself to the ‘object’ on the painting. Unlike the Queen of England, the female model challenges this male-gaze of the artist when she rejects the painting saying, “It is not me” (28). She is not able to identify with the painting.
A deeper feminist reading would reveal how the poem goes beyond voicing a protest against the ‘male-gaze’. The model, though she is standing nude, does not feel uncomfortable by the ‘male gaze’ of the middle-class spectators in the museum, the Queen of England or the artist. Instead, she ‘returns’ all their male-gazes by making sarcastic comments on the middle-class behaviour, the Queen’s aristocratic attitude and the artist’s professional airs. She ‘gazes’ at the artist inquiring, “Why do you do this?” (22). He answers immediately, “I have to. There’s no choice” (23), and instructs her not to talk. But her interrogation and smile make him feel uncomfortable. He becomes conscious/shy that her ‘gaze’ is trying to assess him, “My smile confuses him. These artists/ take themselves too seriously” (23-24). The model’s ‘gaze’ makes him cringe about his profession. So far his superior perceptions about his profession seem to be challenged by her ‘gaze’. The artist cringes at the model’s gaze and senses her sarcasm towards his profession. He becomes an ‘object’ in the gaze of the model. Duffy has ‘objectified’ the artist and his reactions from a female-gaze and thereby countered the trend of female objectification by patriarchy in artistic traditions. The poem resists, counters and decodes the ‘male gaze’ and tries to encode the meaning of a ‘female gaze’ in the experience of the painter-painted.

Towards A Gynocritique

Written by the female poet, Carol Ann Duffy, and strongly asserting the word ‘female’ in its title, the poem provides a firm base for feminist interpretation when opened out in a classroom for a pedagogic purpose. But, the text lends to further decoding of meanings when read against two other works – one inter-textual and the other critical. The poem has a direct reference to the 20th Century cubist painter Georges Braque. It is a response to Pablo Picasso’s painting titled, “Standing Female Nude”. This work by Picasso in 1910 is drawn using charcoal on paper:

This drawing exemplifies many aspects of the style known as Analytic Cubism, pioneered by Picasso with his friend Georges Braque. Here, the artist reinterprets the female nude as a series of lines and semicircles. Areas of shading provide only hints of three-dimensional form; however, essential parts of a human body—head, neck, shoulders, arms, torso, breasts, legs, and kneecaps—appear nonetheless. (metmuseum.org)
The model’s body is not represented in a traditionally realist way but is
drawn as a series of measured, intersecting lines. This muzzled image
makes it difficult for the onlooker to identify a nude female in the painting.

The other text that forms the base for the interpretation of Duffy’s poem is
Elaine Showalter’s essay, “Towards a Feminist Poetics”. Tracing the
history of women’s writing, Elaine Showalter observes how women as
readers and creators of arts must go beyond the ‘feminine’ approach of
imitation and the ‘feminist’ approach of protest/challenge to genuinely
understand the ‘female’ experience:

…one of the problems of the feminist critique is that it is male-
oriented. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male
critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we
are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but
only what men have thought women should be… The critique also
has a tendency to naturalize women’s victimization by making it
the inevitable and obsessive topic of discussion. (“Towards a
Feminist Poetics”)

A feminist criticism of the poem will still be centred on a critique of
patricracy and hence will focus on female nudity as its theme. The poet’s
choice of diction which includes words like “belly, arse and nipple (2)” and
the model’s claim of standing “like this (1)” code meanings of sexual
victimization of the model who us standing nude. On the other hand,
Showalter’s theory of a ‘gynocritic’ – the one who can move beyond
eexisting models of feminist criticism; the one who can read beyond the
elements of imitation and protest in women’s art – helps us to move
towards understanding the human experience of an individual, beyond
issues of sex and gender. In this context, the poem goes beyond the
feminine acceptance of the male gaze and a feminist protest that ‘returns’
this gaze, and argues for the understanding of the ‘female’ body in artistic
traditions.

As Showalter elaborates:

In contrast to this angry or loving fixation on male literature, the
program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the
analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the
study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and

The casual attitude of the model, right through the poem, is what demands a re-reading of the poem from a gynocritical perspective. As for the response of the model, there is no tone of self-pity or sympathy-seeking and she does not drool over the fact that she has to pose nude. Standing nude, she does not feel shy or uncomfortable but is very casual and carefree. This indifference – neither acceptance nor protest – allows a re-reading of the poem beyond its feminist interpretation.

In the context of Picasso’s painting and Showalter’s essay, it becomes evident that the model’s statement, “It does not look like me” (28), is a human protest against distortion of one’s body/‘self’ in an artistic representation. Picasso’s nude cubist painting of a female model is an analytical, geometrical image of boxes, shapes and cubes. The body is reduced to geometrical shapes in this cubist tradition of drawing and is a distorted version of the female body. Gynocritically, the poem intends to present the experience of an individual – a woman here - who is confronted with a distorted image of her own body in an artistic representation, after hours of posing. Beyond a feminist protest, the poem voices a universal human dissatisfaction at any blurred photograph or image of the ‘self’. The woman in the poem celebrates her female body, her profession of nude modelling and is dissatisfied with a cubist representation of her “belly, nipple and arse” (2). Thus, moving beyond a feminist criticism, the poem is an attack on the Cubist Movement in Art. It can also be read as a text that voices class struggles of both the poor man and poor woman.

**A Critique of Art**

The poem raises questions on ‘Art’ and its claims of presenting ‘Life’. The artist drains the model’s energy by making her stand for hours together, thereby negating the pain of her body and the strain involved in standing still without movement. He dismisses the feelings of the ‘real’ world for an ‘unreal’ world of arts which only depicts the external. He dismisses the momentary, sensual feelings of her body in order to immortalize her in his
art. He drains her colours in reality to give colour to his painting and drains the energy out of her to give ‘life’ to his art. The model’s dance during nights is a celebration of reality, life and activity.

Georges, the painter, is “a genius” (15), not just by his virtue of being crafted but because he ‘assumes’ to have transcended the ‘sensual’ feelings of passion– a claim proudly made by all artists. Ironically, he gives in to his ‘ordinary’, human nature at times and is distracted occasionally by the nudity of the model. He does not make open sexual advances to her as it would demean his ‘professional’ nature. Such an act would bring into question the aesthetics of art and the artist, and would challenge the artist’s perception about himself and disfigure his social image as an artistic genius. Though the artist believes in the world of artistic truth and represents realities of an abstract world, his human desire for the body of the model indicates his yearning to belong to the sensual world. His inability to possess the model in reality turns into a vigour that makes him control her on the painting. He takes freedom with her body and exploits her body in the space given to him – in his art.

Critiquing on traditional art, Cubist art claims to represent reality in multiple ways. But in the process of representing multiple realities, the cubist art misses the essence of human nature and completely negates reality. While presenting the female body in multi-dimensions, the artist is unable to capture the feeling of hunger or the feeling of cold that the model experiences while standing nude.

The poem brings into focus the social conceptions of ‘noble’, ‘serious’ professions. Duffy juxtaposes two professions in the poem – that of an artist and that of nude modelling. While artists are respected in the society irrespective of their economical background, modelling nude for a painting has never been deemed respectable for ‘ladies’. The nude model is labelled a whore while her nude painting is preserved in museums! The serious disposition of the proud artist is challenged by the model, who does not cringe in front of the artist but proudly asserts, “Little Man/ You’ve not the money for the arts, I sell”(20). Just as the artist seems happy over his profession, the model is also content with her ‘job’, both as a nude model and as a ‘whore’.
A Critique of Class

The model’s anticipation about the reactions of the middle class and the aristocratic class, which is represented by the Queen, is a definite statement that the poem centres on the theme of class differences. Her standing nude is to make her represent her labour class - both male and female - which stands ‘stripped-off ‘ its basic necessities like food, clothing and proper shelter. The model and the artist – both - represent the working class which labours to ‘entertain’ the middle and upper classes of the society. The working class become ‘products’ which can be ‘consumed’ by the people who can afford luxury either in a limited way like the middle class or lavishly like the upper class.

Duffy comments on the double-standards of the middle class. With their moral conflicts – a desire to be ‘licentious’ enough to enjoy nudity and a religious/social conscience which makes nude art a social taboo – the middle class speak in impressed low voices about the nude painting. Negotiating with their conflict, the middle-class justify their admiration for the painting by branding her as a “river-whore”(7). The poet draws the attention to social attitudes that comfortably/convincingly cast women into two extreme roles – either as ‘divine’ beings or as prostitutes.

On the other hand, the Queen of England, who represents her aristocratic class, is more open in her appreciation of the nude painting. The political licence, social freedom, economic righteousness, intellectual climate and the privilege of leisure made the aristocrats appreciate nude painting as genuine art. Unmindful of her citizen’s poverty-stricken status, the Queen of England is carried away by the ingenuity of the artist. It makes the model “laugh” (14) sarcastically when she anticipates the Queen’s comment, “Magnificent”(13). The model’s ‘laugh’ becomes a sign that challenges the Queen’s efficiency for good governance.

The artist and the model - “both poor” (21) - labour for hours together for a meagre pay, to entertain the middle and the upper classes. The poem juxtaposes the hours of toil made by the working class to satisfy the luxurious demands of the upper classes.
Conclusion

To conclude, interpreting signs in a text to understand its implicit and explicit meanings is a part and parcel of classroom pedagogy. While encoding and decoding of denotative and connotative meanings of signs in the texts are important, signs outside the text are also significant. Pablo Piccaso’s painting “Standing Female Nude” and Showalter’s “Towards a Feminist Poetics” gives more insight into Duffy’s poem. Duffy’s poem reacts strongly against the distortion of the female body by Cubists in order to liberate the female body from its culturally codified erotic significance. Instead, she calls for the deconstruction of erotic meanings that are associated with the female body. The casual tone of the model that lacks empathy strongly argues for the naturalization of female nudity, wherein the culturally codified meanings of eroticism are disconnected from the female body, thereby allowing a nude female model to talk on issues of art and class beyond gender.

References


Representation of Slavery in 
Phillis Wheatley and Antrah Ibn Shaddad

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Abstract

This paper analyses the depiction of slavery in Arabic and English poetry, using Antarah Ibn Shaddad and Phillis Wheatley as examples. The analysis shows that even though the two poets lived at different times and differ in gender, language, country, society, religion, and personality, they both shared very similar experiences and used poetry to express their struggles and their desire to fit in a racist society and dreamt of an equal and free one. They both succeeded in delivering their messages and have had a huge influence over millions of people around the world.

Keywords: Slavery, Antarah Ibn Shaddad, Phillis Wheatley, Anti-slavery, poems, literary devices, sound devices, themes, tones, speaker, Arabic poetry, English poetry.

Introduction

Misery has always been the driving force to writing poetry. It is “the parent of the most affecting touches in poetry” (Nott, 1993, p.27). Slave trade is a major history event that represents one of the most terrible crimes against mankind. Many families in different generations and places underwent suffering because of slavery. In the horrific world of slavery, slaves had to find means of escape that would enable them to overcome the obstacles of oppression and torture. This paper aims to show the representation of slavery in Arabic and English poetry through the usage of poetic devices, sound and rhythm, themes, language, tone, symbols, and imagery by analyzing the poems of Antrah Ibn Shaddad and Phillis Wheatley. The study analyzes former slaves’ poems and attempt to find the similarities and differences between them as well as the influence they had over people at that time and in the present time.
The contrast is made according to the poems’ titles, speakers, literary and sound devices, tones, and the poets’ arguments. It also generalizes the findings by contrasting them to other Arabic and English poets.

**Title**

Any title should generate curiosity and interest to drive readers deeper into the poem. Here, the poets use literal and figurative titles. The titles of the three poems chosen for Wheatley have literal meanings while the other three of Ibn Shaddad are figurative. The titles of Wheatley’s poems are direct; they are straightforward to the point she is trying to make. *On Being Brought from Africa to America* talks about her journey through slavery and the struggles of a young woman looked down by a society contradicting its values. Similarly, *To the University of Cambridge, in New England* is a poem dedicated to the students of Harvard. It reminds them of the necessity of education and Christianity. Also, *To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, and His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for North America* is a letter to the man mentioned in the title and it touches on various topics including race.

Poets sometimes employ figurative technique in writing literary titles. Figurative means that the title is imaginative or metaphorical. Arab poets during pre-Islamic period were not used to writing titles for their poems, their poems were recognized by a specific line from the poem; one example is Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma’s famous *Muʿ allaqa*. *Then cannot hide their guilt from God* which is the first line of the poem. Even though Ibn Shaddad’s poems were titled by people over the centuries, there must be a reason –or reasons- for a specific line in the poem to get recognized. The poem in table 3.4, is known as *I did not cease to climb to the heights*. It is a strong metaphor by itself and it tells a lot about the poem in general. The other two *Muaʾllaqat* of his follow the same system; the poem in table 3.5 is titled *Allah bless the Banu*, this might be regarded to the fact that it is a *Madeh* poem to his tribe and they would surely recognize the line they were praised in.

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1. collection of seven pre-Islamic poems hanged in Ka’ba, Mecca
2. Kind of pre-Islamic period in which poets praise kings and leaders.
Themes

The two poets wrote about similar issues and topics; therefore, the themes of their poems are very similar. They talk about race prejudices, and how slavery is a moral issue before anything else. While Wheatley uses religion to make her case, Ibn Shaddad uses his heroic acts in battles to convince his tribe of his superiority.

Race prejudices are the most significant themes in the poems of Ibn Shaddad and Wheatley. Slavery over Africans in particular was based on the fact that they were considered of an inferior race because of their skin colour. In table 3.1, Wheatley makes it apparent that they were treated less because “their colour is a diabolic die” and they are “black as Cain.” She criticizes their approaches by explaining how ridiculous their arguments are; one, it is not fair to act with people differently according to their skin colour, and two, black people can be enlightened by Christianity and join “the angelic train.” Ibn Shaddad’s poems too, focus on the prejudices taken against the black race. He says “Allah bless the Banu Abs for they were born noble,” but that does not mean that born into nobility allows anyone to treat others any less because he can work his own way to “the Jauza” by hardworking not by inheriting his father’s name.

Another common theme is ancestry. Though both Ibn Shaddad and Wheatley did not know their ancestors, nor did they live in Africa among their people, they show a great deal of belonging and love to the lands they were connected to. In table 3.4, Wheatley describes Africa as “fancy’d happy seat” which was unacceptable to the white race in America since they saved them from “the land of errors, and Egyptian gloom” then enlightened them with Christianity. Also, she stresses out the fact that she is “an Ethiop” in the poem To the University of Cambridge, in New England. It shows a significant amount of pride inside of her to the fact that she is Ethiopian. Similarly, Ibn Shaddad makes it obvious that he is proud of his ancestors when they “attacked,” them in Mecca, and he proudly admits that his black skin is a feature that he inherited from his ancestors, as mentioned in table 3.5.

A Speaker of a poem is different from the poet. It is the voice that tells the story in the poem. Liskey (2013) claims that in anti-slavery poems, the poet tries to hide himself as much as possible by separating himself from the
speaker in fear of being caught by their masters, the law, or even critics. Therefore, the speaker might be a voice of another gender, race, or even an object. However, from the analysis shown in tables 3.1 to 3.6, it can be observed that Wheatley and Ibn Shaddad hardly try to separate themselves from the speakers—or the voices—of their poems. That is, in a way, a sign that both are not ashamed of who they were. Both were born into slavery, considered people of an inferior race and looked scornfully at. Nevertheless, the two of them embraced this idea by announcing proudly to the world they are Africans, but that does not mean they cannot achieve something by working hard for it.

Wheatley in her poem *To the University of Cambridge, in New England* speaks to the students of Harvard and gives them advice in religion and education as an “Ethiopian girl” not caring if she would be criticized as a less educated non-citizen trying to advice well-educated Americans.

Ibn Shaddad did not separate himself from the speaker as well. He was actually proud of his African ancestors and never addressed himself as one of Banu Abs, but to his mother’s ancestors in Ethiopia when he says, “If they blame my blackness it is my ancestry.” Another reason that might have led him to not use a fictional speaker is the fact that he was a warrior in battlefields, and according to what he says, he “got great glory for them with the sword,” which is an obvious reason to make him proud of himself.

**Literary and sound devices**

Literary and sound devices do not only add beauty and power to the poem, they can be used as methods to convey messages and draw images that cannot be explained in ordinary language. The main devices used are metaphors, similes, symbolism, allusion, personification and rhyme.

Both Wheatley and Ibn Shaddad use strong metaphorical images to portrait the act of slavery and everything related to it. In table 3.3, Wheatley describes the enslavers as “lawless hand” which shows her view on the cruel and inhumane attitude toward the poor Africans. She also describes heaven as “the angelic train” to present her argument which says that anyone deserves the chance to enter heaven because of God’s “gracious hand” which is a metaphor to God’s mercy in the poem *To the University of Cambridge, in New England*. Ibn Shaddad’s poems are, mostly, written
in a metaphorical language. He says, سوادي لي نسبةً, the translator, in table 3.5, used sense-for-sense translation, but if it is translated word-for-word, it would be “my blackness is my ancestry.” Though it is portrayed as a metaphor, it holds a very strong direct meaning. He proudly confesses that his blackness is a part of him and he is proud of that. Also, in table 3.6, Ibn Shaddad manipulates his haters’ argument and turn it to his own advantage when he says that their “acts were darker with dirt than my skin.”

Similes create mental images that ease the imagination of the reader and touch his senses. In On Being Brought from Africa to America, Wheatley uses a description used by her society frequently which is “black as Cain,” but she implies that, like Adam’s son, her race deserve a second chance. In table 3.4, Ibn Shaddad announces that he is not afraid of those who keep insulting and blaming his skin colour as the fear of “death or loss of life” is much powerful in him. He, using this simile, draws an idea showing his carelessness when it comes to what people say or think of him.

Symbolism is when an object represents a concept or another bigger thing. Wheatley uses the “pen” to symbolize her writing as shown in table 3.2. Ibn Shaddad’s use of symbols is more clear and frequent. As mentioned in table 3.4, “Jauza” symbolizes high places. This symbol generates a hierarchal image and shows that though his people think that he is at the bottom of the hierarchy, he believes that through hardworking, he already achieved a higher place. This hardworking was by the use of his “sword”, which symbolizes fights, heroism, and bravery in battlefields.

Personification is when the poet gives objects human traits, actions, or feelings. It is usually used to emphasize a point. Wheatley in table 3.3, personifies “Freedom” by capitalizing it. This shows how much it means to her. Freedom is something natural and must be given to human beings and denying it for a group of people just because of their skin colour is something unacceptable. Ibn Shaddad uses personification in the poem in table 3.4 when he says稳固ن النفس عن شهواتها which is translated to “I will defend the soul against its desires.” He separate himself from his soul and claims that the soul has desires like human beings.

Following a specific rhyme scheme shows how good the poet is. For Wheatley and Ibn Shaddad, who were not considered natives because they were born to slaves, following a specific rhyme scheme means that they
are challenging their societies and showing them that they are capable of mastering the language like any native speaker. Wheatley uses it cleverly in her poem *To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for North-America, &c.* It is divided into couplets. The rhyme scheme is (aabbcceeff…). Moreover, she uses other sound devices such as alliteration like in the examples: “must molest” and “misery mov’d,” and assonance in “they stay.” Similarly, Ibn Shaddad used the *Qafiya* to impress and challenge his enviers. As shown in table 3.5 he uses the rhyme scheme /u/, /u/, /bu/, /bu/. He also uses other sound devices such as alliteration and consonance, known in Arabic as one term which is Saja’. An example of alliteration is مضى أرْعَى, and consonance as مجدًا ممشدًا.

**Tone and attitude**

In contrast to what Liskey (2013) said about the tone of black poems, Wheatley and Ibn Shaddad’s tones are not completely sad and desperate. The dominant tones in their poems are judgmental, angry and proud sometimes.

From the first reading, readers might think that Wheatley’s tone is objective, but understanding the topic and knowing the background further lead to think that the main tone in Wheatley’s poem is judgmental more than anything else. She views on the issue of slavery and takes a stand. She answers questions like, “is it right or wrong?”, “why should it stop?” or “why should it be pursued?” Similarly, there are huge parts in Ibn Shaddad’s poems where the tone is judgmental. He judges his father who “denied” him, his folks for being “evil” to him, and his tribe because they “ruined” his glory; all of that because he was born to a slave mother and happened to have a darker skin than them. To both poets, it is superficial and trivial to be treated badly because of the way they were born in.

Wheatley starts her poem in table 3.3 with a strongly angry tone when she says, “no more, America.” Then, through the first stanza, she shows her rejection to the acts over her grieved race. Ibn Shaddad shows his anger in a more direct way. His anger is detected in different parts through a poem. In table 3.4, he states, “I am angry with my critics and my enviers,” then he goes explaining his “rage” over his folks who are being “evil” to him. He is angry that a “noble” tribe with a long history would look down at
him because of a trivial thing like his skin colour. He is angry that he is not allowed to dream and to be ambitious, even though he never ceases “climbing to the heights.” This anger inside of him, which is reflected clearly in his poem, is transferred to a motive for him to do better, he says, “If I survive I will do wonders and I will silence the rhetoric of the eloquent.”

Though not frequent, the sense of belonging in Wheatley’s poems leads her to think proudly of herself and her race. She emphasizes the facts that she is “an Ethiop” in table 3.3, and she shows a little bit of pride for the fact that a young black woman get to give advice for Harvard students. In Arabic poetry, there is a famous genre known as Fakhr, egotism. In these kinds of poems, poets tend to talk proudly about their families, ancestors, and their achievements. This genre is very clear in Ibn Shaddad’s poems. He overestimate his heroism in battlefields and his bravery in protecting the tribe. One example is in table 3.5 when he says, “I got great glory for them with the sword.” Also, he claims that in the past he “kept their guard if attacked.”

“Rarely does a poet begin and end the poetic experience in the same place” (Rudolph, 2011, p.49). It makes the understanding of an experience a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that changing of feelings of the speaker from the beginning to end with paying particular attention to the conclusion. Wheatley’s poem On Being Brought from Africa to America has a shift after the fourth line. She starts her poem praising the white race and Christians for bringing her to America and enlightening her soul with the knowledge of God. However, after pleasing her audience, she starts criticizing their approach of how do they deal with black people. The same in To the University of Cambridge, in New England, in which she starts out shaky and chaotic but ends up in a firm attitude, which reflects her real understanding of the importance of the issue.

In Ibn Shaddad’s poem in table 3.5, it can be noticed that in line four and five, he’s praising his tribe, after that, in line six, he is judging their logic behind hating on his skin colour. He does the same in the poem in table 3.6; he starts saying that his tribe rejected him, after that he shifted to talking about the reason behind their rejection and hatred.
The poets’ arguments against slavery

Both writers show their rejection to the act of enslaving Africans in several ways including hardworking, family, and treatment.

Ibn Shaddad and Wheatley worked hard to erase “slave” off their identity and used different methods to do so; Wheatley through her education and Ibn Shaddad through his heroism. Since religions are founded on the idea that all people are equal, they deserve the right to live in happiness and liberty, God is merciful, and anyone can be enlightened by faith, Wheatley challenges the Christians to explain their attitude toward the slaves when they are really religious. She uses this argument to make her case in On Being Brought from Africa to America when she says, “Remember, Christians, Negro’s, black as Cain, may be refin’d, and join th' angelic train” and to show the hypocrisy of the society. Moreover, as shown in table 3.2, she says, “the muses promise to assist my pen,” she is clearly using her writing to fight for her and her race’s rights. On the other hand, Ibn Shaddad uses the power of “sword” to make something of himself in the tribe. He claims that he “got great glory for them with the sword,” but that was not enough for them to recognize him as more than a zinji.

In both Wheatley and Ibn Shaddad’s poems, the sense of importance of family appears in different places throughout the poems to strike emotional chord in societies that viewed family as the beating heart of it. Ibn Shaddad mentions his mother’s name several times in different poems like when he says, “my color bothers not me nor Zabiba’s name.” Firstly, he is intending to say that his color did not make him any less of a loving son to his mother, his only family, and one part of the core of that society. He also wants to gain sympathy against his father who neglected him when he says “whoever denied me” as a way of seeking attention. Wheatley also uses family relations to support her argument against slavery when she describes the reaction of parents whose child was taken away from them saying,

What sorrows labour in my parent’s breast?

Steel’d was that soul and by no misery mov’d

That from a father seiz’d his babe belov’d
Undoubtedly, slaves were treated badly both emotionally and physically (as mentioned in 2.1.2). In Ibn Shaddad and Wheatley’s poems there are differences in how they presented their arguments using emotional and physical treatment. Antrah Ibn Shaddad struggled with people looking down at him and insulting his skin colour. He shows his disappointment at them when he says, “they blamed my colour as black but their acts were darker with dirt than my skin,” and in another poem he says, “I am angry with my critics and my enviers,” in this line, he talks about his ambitions and dreams that he could not achieve because he was not given the chance to do so, simply because he was born to a slave mother. Wheatley, too, uses sympathy to gain people’s attention to this issue. She says, “Some view our sable race with scornful eye,” to show the unfair actions taken against them.

The physical treatment of slaves is mentioned in Wheatley’s poem in table 3.3 when she describes the struggle those slaves went through since the very beginning from being kidnapped, then travel the long way, beaten to accept their new conditions until they reach the plantations were they start working in till the end of their lives. She uses strong images to describe that physical pain, and the treatment of the landowners, one example is when she says:

No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain,
Which wanton Tyranny with lawless hand
Had made, and with it meant t’ enslave the land.

**Slavery in Arabic and English poetry in a wider picture**

There are many other figures in Arabic and English poetry who wrote about the horribleness and cruelty of slavery such as Nusayb Ibn Rabah (died in 726), and Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967). Though they used different methods to articulate their arguments, reading through their poems gives the same sense of rejection and anger towards slavery.

Ibn Rabah has a similar approach to Ibn Shaddad when arguing against slavery. This is apparent when he says, “my blackness does not harm my habit, for I am like musk” (Fradernburg and Freccero, 1996, p.29). By the
same token, Hughes uses the indirect language like Wheatley, one example is when he says in *I, Too, Sing America*:

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

(Cited in Nunes and Vieira, 2007, p.5)

Therefore, though many people against slavery using completely different arguments and methods, they agreed that it was a horrible crime that needed to be abolished.

**Conclusion**

This paper focused on the depiction of slavery in Arabic and English poetry using Phillis Wheatley and Antarah Ibn Shaddad’s poems as models. They are separated by twelve centuries, but they both share a similar perspective and express the same desire for an equal and free society through their poetry.

The results, to some extent, agree with previous researches done on the topic of slavery in poetry. One is that they use figurative and indirect language to reflect their opinions on slavery, which can be explained by the fear generated by society. Two, the most common and significant themes of their poems include social criticism because of race prejudices and ancestry honour. Three, the language they used includes different literary and sound devices that did not only add to the overall beauty of the poem, but they were able to use them to make their arguments more powerful. Four, the most significant tones used in their poems are judgmental, angry, and proud. Each relates somehow to the argument between race and society. Lastly, they used very sensitive arguments to influence people’s perspectives of slavery both logically
and emotionally, including family, physical and emotional treatment as well as their hardworking both in writing and battles.

This topic is important because it develops better understanding of using poetry as a tool of expressing feelings. It shows that slavery cannot be justified, even between two poets who differ not only in the time they lived in but in gender, society, religion, and personality. It also demonstrates the usefulness of writing and the influence it has over people. Furthermore, it discusses the dominant themes, tones, and images in the poems of slavery, which is useful for literature students in particular.

Overall, slavery, as a historical event, is a horrible and cruel act that cannot be justified. However, as a literary topic, it surely brought up strong ideologies and gave birth to famous names that made it possible for this act to be abolished later on.

**References**


**Appendix**

-Phillis Wheatley-

*(Table 3.1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title\Type</th>
<th>On Being Brought from Africa to America</th>
<th>Literal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>’Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land. Taught my benighted soul to understand That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too: Once I redemption neither sought nor knew. Some view our sable race with scornful eye, &quot;Their colour is a diabolic die.&quot; Remember, Christians, Negro's, black as Cain, May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Paraphrase | God was merciful to get me out of a non-Christian land. My ignorant soul learned to understand That God and a Savior do exist. Before, I did not know nor did I seek learning. Some people look at our black race with hatred eyes Thinking that black is a color of evil. Oh, Christians, you have to keep in mind that Cain’s race Can be rechristened and be on the right track too. |

| Speaker | From the title, it can be assumed that it is autobiographical. However, the speaker might be any black African who was kidnapped and brought to America. That speaker is angry at the American society for viewing them as inferior race. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figurative language</th>
<th>Allusion</th>
<th>Cain (Biblical Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>th’ angelic train (heaven)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simile</td>
<td>black as Cain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhyme scheme</td>
<td>Couplet (aabbccdd)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Judgmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<p>| Shifts | There is a change in the focus of the topic from being thankful to Christians for enlightening her soul to judging their attitude toward slaves. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Race prejudices in society should stop.</th>
<th>Everyone deserves a chance to enter heaven.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Table 3.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title\Type</th>
<th>To the University of Cambridge, in New England</th>
<th>Literal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>WHILE an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,</td>
<td>Improve your privileges while they stay,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The muses promise to assist my pen;</td>
<td>Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>’Twas not long since I left my native shore</td>
<td>Or good or bad report of you to heav’n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom:</td>
<td>Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father of mercy, ’twas thy gracious hand</td>
<td>By you be shunn’d, nor once remit your guard;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.</td>
<td>Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ye blooming plants of human race divine,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An Ethiop tells you ’tis your greatest foe;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>And in immense perdition sinks the soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>I have this driving force pushing me to write</td>
<td>You have to develop yourself while you can,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under the protection of the muses.</td>
<td>You, students, should make use of each hour,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I left my country not a while ago;</td>
<td>Because everything you do will be reported to heaven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They were lands of many errors ruled by Egyptians.</td>
<td>Avoid sin, it is a poison to the soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was God’s mercy</td>
<td>Don’t you ever run away, be cautious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That got me out of these dark lands.</td>
<td>Don’t let evil desires take over you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You are the seeds that will keep the human race safe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

112
Listen to me, an Ethiopian girl, it is your biggest enemy; 
It starts sweet but causes nothing but pain at the end, 
And it greatly ruins your soul.

**Speaker**
From the experience of kidnapping and enslaving, it can be assumed that it is autobiographical. The speaker is an Ethiopian well-educated black person, who is criticizing the approaches followed in teaching at universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figurative language</th>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Pen (to writing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>thy gracious hand (God’s mercy), the deadly serpent (sins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assonance</td>
<td>they stay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhyme scheme</td>
<td>Blank verse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tone**
Sarcastic and indignant.

**Shifts**
First stanza discusses the writer’s passion to write this particular poem, then the second and third stanzas contain advices to students stating the facts of Christianity and the consequences of not following it in the teachings of the bible and not of tradition.

**Theme**
- Racism toward the black race must stop.
- It is urgent to renounce sins.

**Table 3.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title\Type</th>
<th>Poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for North-America, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Literal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>No more, America, in mournful strain Of wrongs, and grievance unredress’d complain, No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain, Which wanton Tyranny with lawless hand Had made, and with it meant t’ enslave the land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song, Wonder from whence my love of Freedom sprung, Whence flow these wishes for the common good, By feeling hearts alone best understood, I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Was snatch’d from Afric’s fancy’d happy seat:
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent’s breast?
Steel’d was that soul and by no misery mov’d
That from a father seiz’d his babe belov’d:
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

Paraphrase

Stop doing it, America, to a race filled with grief.
A race mourns about its sadness, and many mistakes.
You should not fear the chains anymore.
It is a Tyranny system of absolute power
That was made to rule over the lands and enslave their people.

My God, you may wonder, through this poem
Where did love of Freedom come from?
From where did all these wishes for humanity’s goodness?
Understanding comes by feeling others emotions.
I was young but I experienced a horrible fate.
I was taken away from my happy African family,
What kind of sharp abusing pain I went through?
How much of woe do my parents held in their hearts?
That soul was kidnapped and was treated mercilessly.
Taken from a father that surely loved his child.
This is my situation, but I have nothing to do but to pray,
Other people do not feel the influence of Tyranny.

Speaker

The speaker is an African who went through the horrible experience of slavery. He/she is using pathos (language of emotions) to make the readers sympathize with the situation of slaves at that time.

Figurative language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>lawless hand (enslavers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliteration</td>
<td>must molest, misery mov’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhyme scheme</td>
<td>Couplet (aabcceeffghh)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tone

Judgmental, disdainful, and bitter.
Shifts are through stanzas with no changing of topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Family relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Society’s attitude toward slaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cannibalism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-Antarah Ibn Shaddad-

(Table 3.4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title\Type</th>
<th>ما زلت مرتقياً إلى العلياء</th>
<th>Figurative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>I did not cease to climb to the heights</td>
<td>ما زلت مرتقياً إلى العلياء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Until I reached the peak of the Jauza</td>
<td>حتى بلغت إلى ذرى الجوزاء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From thence</td>
<td>فهناك لا البوي علية من لامني</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I turn not to one who blames me</td>
<td>كخوف الممات وفرقة الأحياء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like in fear of death or loss of life</td>
<td>فلا غضبنا عوادلي وحاسدي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am angry with my critics and my enviers</td>
<td>ولا أصبر علية قلبي وجواء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will be patient with rage and passion</td>
<td>ولا أجهد على اللقاء لكني أرى</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will strive for a meeting so I may know</td>
<td>ما أرهب أو يهين قضائي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What I hope for or when my judgment nears</td>
<td>ولاحمين النفس عن شهوانا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will defend the soul against its desires</td>
<td>حتى أرى ذمة ووفاء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Until I know loyalty and trust</td>
<td>من كان يحذني فقد برح الخفا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ما كنت أكمه عن الرقياء</td>
<td>ما ساءتي لوين واسم زبيدة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whoever denied me, the hidden was revealed</td>
<td>إنَّ قَصَّرَتْ عَنْ هَمْتِي أُعِدَّانِي</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not hide it from the watchmen</td>
<td>فَلَنَّ يَقُبْتُ لأَصْنَعَنَّ عِجَانًا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My color bothers not me nor Zabiba’s name</td>
<td>ولَا يَكُونُنَّ بَلَاغَةً الفُصْحاءَ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since my enemies are short of my ambition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I survive I will do wonders and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will Silence the rhetoric of the eloquent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>I was still going up,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Until I got to the position of Jauza.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Since then,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have not paid attention to those who insult me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afraid of death or losing lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am mad at those who keep criticizing and envying me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will keep being patient with both my anger and passion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will try to have a meeting so I can know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What should I wish for when me death gets close.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will fight my soul to stop wanting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Until I learned the meaning for trust and loyalty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whoever abandoned me, the secrets are out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did not hide it from the guards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My dark skin did not irritate my mother nor me.
My enemies are unaware of my ambitions; therefore,
If I stayed alive I will do miracles,
I will leave the best poets speechless.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>The speaker is a young ambitious warrior who is angry at his critics and those who keep insulting his skin color.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figurative language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Symbol</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Simile</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Personification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhyme scheme</strong></td>
<td>(Qafiya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone</strong></td>
<td>Haughty and indignant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shifts</strong></td>
<td>There are no shifts in the speaker’s tone or theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td>- Ambition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Egotism and pride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- People will keep criticizing and judging no matter what.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 3.5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title\Type</th>
<th>الرحمن ﷺ نبى عيسى</th>
<th><strong>Figurative</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>He who is servant of folk opposes not them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If they anger him, content if they censure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ومن يكن عبد قوم لا يخالفهم إذا جفوه ويسترضي إذا عتبوا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

117
In those times past I pastured their camels
And for a day kept their guard if attacked
Allah bless the Banu Abs for they were born
Noble as few of the Arabs were born
If they blame my blackness it is my ancestry
On the day of attack when lineage lacks me.

Paraphrase
He was a servant that did not oppose his people.
If they scolded him and he got angry, he kept silent.
There were times when I pastured their camels
And I kept them safe from enemies.
God bless my tribe for
They were born nobles like not many in Arabs.
They blame my dark skin, but it is in my ancestors’
Who when they attacked, my writing failed me.

Speaker
The speaker is a black man from an Arab tribe who views his black skin as a shame. He defends himself and his ancestors with pride.

Figurative language
Metaphor
Alliteration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Alliteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>سوادي في نسبة</td>
<td>ماضي أرغعي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(سجع)</td>
<td>(سجع)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rhyme scheme (Qafiya) /u/, /u/, /bu/, /bu/  
Tone Gloomy and indignant  
Shifts After line six there’s shift in the speaker’s tone. In line four and five, he’s praising his tribe, after that in line six, he is judging their logic behind hating on his skin color.  
Theme - Social criticism.  
- Ancestors.  

(Table 3.6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title\Type</th>
<th>إذا فاض دمعي واستهل على خدٍّي</th>
<th>Figurative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>I recall my folks evil to me, their crimes And small justice in things near and far I got great glory for them with the sword As their honor came they ruined my fame They blamed my color as black but their Acts were darker with dirt than my skin.</td>
<td>أذكر قومي ظلمهم لي وبغيهم وقلة إنصافي على القرب والبعد بنيت فُهم بالسيف مجدًا مشيئًا فلما تناهي مجدهم هدموا مجدٍ في عيون لوني بالسواد وإغا فعاهم بالخبث آسود من جلدي</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paraphrase My people are treating me bad, They do not give me credit for my achievements. With my bravery in the battlefield, I brought them glory
| But once they got the winning, they ignored me. |
| They blame my blackness while their Attitude is much darker than my skin. |

**Speaker**
The speaker is a proud and brave warrior who is not appreciated by his tribe because he comes from a slave mother.

**Figurative language**

| Metaphor | فعاصم بالخيث أسودُ من جلدي |
| Symbol | السِّيفِ (to heroism) |
| Consonance | سجعٍ (مُشيدًا مُشيدًا) |
| Rhyme scheme (Qafiya) | /du/, /i/, /i/ |

**Tone**
Judgmental and indignant.

**Shifts**
He starts saying that his tribe rejects him, after that he shifted to talking about the reason behind this rejection and hatred.

**Theme**
- Acts are stronger than words.
- Coming from black ancestors is not a shame.
‘Writing’ Space Before the ‘Turn’: A Study of Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway

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Abstract

The contemporaneous Literary Spatial Studies is one of the results of the 20th century Spatial-turn’s influence on Literature. The research trends in this field are based on ‘reading’ Space(s) in a literary creation, which reveals different dimensions of a text. These ‘readings’ are aware of the ‘turn’, the shifts in the history of Space and its theoretical understandings.

However, this paper argues that there had been earlier models of literary representations of Space, where the author is very much aware of the Space in narration, when the resurgence of Space is still far away. In this context, this study, takes up Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway (1925) and explores the spatiality of the stream of consciousness narration at different levels. Breaking the linear flow of narration, this novel simultaneously portrays different lives at different Spaces and temporal zones and thus turns out to be spatial. Thus, this paper concludes that Space was consciously ‘written’ before it is ‘read’ as the result of the 20th century Spatial-turn.

Keywords: Spatial-turn, literature, literary spatial studies

Introduction

The impact of the Spatial-turn on Literature resulted in the emergence of Literary Spatial Studies, which explores the functional role of Space in a literary work, the symbiosis of the real and fictional spaces, of the Space and human perception and Space and its literary representation. The contemporaneous research trends in the literary and cultural studies foreground the significance of spatiality in literary representation. The terms such as ‘Literary Cartography’ and ‘Literary Geography’ have marked the shifts in current literary research trends. The emergence of Geocriticism and Literary Spatial Studies highlight the dialogue between
the spatiality of life and literary representation. These recent developments in this field are based on the ‘reading’, which is conscious of Space in literary representation. As a result of the spatialization of literary studies, there are ‘writings’ which are influenced by this awareness of the impact of Space over life. George Perec’s *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* is one such exemplary work. This focuses on how a particular Space is being crisscrossed by various human activities, which make the Space what it is.

However, this study argues that there were ‘writings’ with spatial awareness which reveal the functional role of Space in literary representations, even before the ‘turn’ towards Space in literary studies. In this context, this study takes up Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, a modernist text and traces the spatiality of the stream of consciousness narration. This study also highlights how Woolf’s obsession with the portrayal of London’s Space and her aims to compose a new form of novel which “envelops everything” (which according to her, is missing in other forms), are blended through narration and turns out to be the representation of the spatio-temporal dimensions of life.

There is a general notion that Modernism is inclined towards Time and Post-modernism towards Space. Foucault’s lecture on “Of Other Spaces” (1967) which demarcates the 19th and 20th century between Time and Space strengthens this notion. This also influences the interpretation of the Modernist texts. However, Modernist works which are generally seen in terms of temporality are highly suggestive of spatiality. Before analyzing the spatiality in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), it is important to note how the Modernist texts are implicitly spatial. Edward Soja in his “Taking Space Personally” quotes John Berger whose words reveal the inherent spatiality of the modern novel:

> We hear a lot about the crisis of the modern novel. What this involves, fundamentally, is a change in the mode of narration. It is scarcely any longer possible to tell a straight story sequentially unfolding in time. And this is because we are too aware of what is continually traversing the storyline laterally. That is to say, instead of being aware of a point as an infinitely small part of a straight line, we are aware of it as an infinitely small part of an infinite number of lines, as the centre of star
of lines. Such awareness is the result of our constantly having to take into account the simultaneity and extension of events and possibilities… Prophesy now involves a geographical rather than historical projection; it is space not time that hides consequences from us… Any contemporary narrative that ignores the urgency of this dimension is incomplete and acquires the oversimplified character of a fable. (27)

Here, Berger illustrates how the modern novel which lacks a story ‘line’, without any linear order of narration can accommodate the simultaneity of life, which turns out to be spatial (he uses the word “geographical” instead).

Similarly, Joseph Frank, in his *Idea of Spatial Form* (1945) re examines certain modernist texts and reveals how they turn out to be spatial. For instance, his analysis of Gustav Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856) and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) reveal how these texts, by breaking the linearity of narration, show a halt in Time and portray various events that take place ‘simultaneously’. This simultaneity is not possible in the linear narration. This simultaneity is highly suggestive of spatiality. With reference to a scene from *Madam Bovary*, followed by Frank’s comments, illuminates how the simultaneity of narration is achieved through a pause in the linearity of narration:

“From magnetism, by slow degrees, Rodolphe had arrived at affinities, and while M. le President was citing Cincinnatus at his plow, Diocletian planting his cabbages and the emperors of China ushering in the New Year with sowing-festivals, the young man was explaining to the young woman that these irresistible attractions sprang from some anterior existence.”

This scene illustrates, on a small scale, what we mean by the spatialization of form in a novel. For the duration of the scene, at least, the time-flow of the narrative is halted; attention is fixed on the interplay of relationships within the immobilized time-area. (17)

Both Berger and Frank’s observations on the modern novel highlights how breaking the linearity and the portrayal of the simultaneity of events
spatializes the narration. Frank also argues that in *Ulysses*, this kind of spatialization enable the representation of Dublin’s holistic Space possible.

Similarly, the stream of consciousness narration of *Mrs. Dalloway* is also suggestive of spatiality. The narration keeps shifting between thoughts and reality, between different characters, different temporal segments and spatial locations. These constant shifts forbid the linear flow of narration and the novel becomes a representation of the spatiality of lives. Apart from this, there are other aspects of the novel which emphasize its spatiality.

Generally, in the spatial analysis of a literary text, the portrayal of the physical Space highlights its cartographicity. Natalia Wright in her “Mrs. Dalloway: A Study in Composition” states, “Mrs. Dalloway, indeed, is an easier novel to diagram than to summarize” (358). In Wright’s statement a ‘map’ can be a perfect replacement for the word “diagram”. This emphasizes the pictorial quality or the cartographicity of the novel, which spreads the narration as both physical and psychological maps. This can be analysed at three different levels: the physical description of London’s Space; the narration’s oscillatory shifts between an individual’s thoughts and actions; and its movement from one character to another.

At the first level, the physical descriptions of London’s Space with the minute details of the places and the streets that the characters move through, the narration locates the lives of the characters and concretizes the place of action. For instance, the descriptions of Clarissa’s walk from her home to the flower shop, Peter Walsh’s walk when he follows a lady, Septimus’ walk and the movement of the celebrity’s car draw the map of a part of London, where Woolf ‘sets’ the novel. The narration also portrays certain other places such as the Regent’s Park, the Westminster and the Buckingham Palace, where different individual lives are juxtaposed, which becomes the essence of the simultaneous portrayal of lives. Apart from this, the detailed descriptions of places demarcate the boundaries for the place of action.

At the second level, the narration, which keeps shifting between thoughts and reality, reveals an oscillation between the dualities of Time and Space. For instance, Clarissa’s thoughts keep moving back and forth between her
past in Bourton and the present in London. Similarly, Lucrezia’s thoughts oscillate between London’s Space in the present and Italy’s Space in the past. Besides, Septimus’ being is divided between two different worlds: the real world and the world created in his mind, which obscures reality. Peter’s thoughts also keep moving between the Space of London and the other Spaces such as Bourton, India and the ‘other’ London ten years ago.

These oscillations create a kind of cartography, where the Spaces and Times of the Past and Present are constantly crisscrossed by thoughts. This cartography of thoughts helps to make sense of the characters’ lives and the nature of their relationship with London’s Space. These oscillations also highlight the duality of Space and Time.

At the third level, focusing on the narration, which keeps gliding from one character to another, reveals how different lives are interrelated through Space and Time. For example, the description of the car scene reveals how different individuals’ thoughts are unified for a period of time. The following lines reveal how the car scene becomes a simultaneous portrayal of different individual thoughts:

Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry’s shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Everyone looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. (136)

The events described in this passage are unrelated to each other yet their simultaneous narration reveals how they become related through Space. Similarly, the description of an aero plane writing “TOFFEE” also becomes a centre of attraction for different characters which turn out to be the simultaneous portrayal of various thoughts. The following lines describe how the narration penetrates through various lives in different spaces:
It has gone; it was behind the clouds. There was no sound. The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was – a mission of the greatest importance. Then, suddenly, as a train comes out of a tunnel, the aero plane rushed out of the clouds again, the sound boring into the ears of all people in the Mall, in the Green Park, in Piccadilly, in Regent Street, in Regent’s Park, and the bar of smoke curved behind and it dropped down, and it soared up and wrote one letter after another – but what word was it writing?

Lucrezia Warren Smith, sitting by her husband’s side on seat in Regent’s Park in the Broad Walk, looked up. (140)

This scene portrays how the curiosity aroused by the aeroplane connects people at different part of London ‘simultaneously’ and the narration glides to Lucrezia and Septimus. This can be seen as an example of how the narration glides from one character to another, from one place to another and reveals the simultaneity of lives.

Apart from this, the strokes of the Big Ben, whose “leaden circles dissolve in the air” symbolize the movement of Time. Being heard by different individuals in various parts of London, these strokes also unite various lives together. Thus, the portrayal of the simultaneity of lives which spatializes the narration, reveals how the seemingly unrelated lives of various individuals become interconnected through Space and Time like warp and weft and thus create different designs made of various ‘lines of thoughts’, passing through and cutting across each other. Thus, the spatialized narration of Mrs. Dalloway reveals the cartographicity of lives and their invisible interconnections, which eludes our attention in our everyday life.

Identifying these levels of cartography in Mrs. Dalloway also illuminates it as a literary representation of Space. Woolf, in this novel not only portrays the Space but also the nuances of the dialogic relationship between Space and human life and the simultaneous co-existence of various Spatio-human dialogues.
Generally, a literary work which focuses more on the representation of Space remains only with the ‘portrayal’ of Space, at the cartographic level. For instance, R.K. Narayan’s Malgudi novels draw a holistic picture of a fictional city, they do not decipher into the interconnections of Space and human lives. Here, narration and Space are laid apart, where Space remains merely as a detailed cartographic portrayal whereas the Space of *Mrs. Dalloway* is composed of the perfect blend of the physical description of London’s Space and spatio-human dialogues.

Moreover, Woolf’s portrayal of London captures the nuances of the spatio-human dialogue, which includes not only the physical descriptions and the movements of the characters but also the various perceptual modes, which result in the holistic picture of Space and its multi-dimensionality. For instance, apart from the cartographic description of London’s Space, (which is entirely based on the visual perception), the narration also reveals its sensual and psychological perceptions. The description of noise of the motor cars and different smells in various parts of the novel reveal the acoustic, olfactory and tactile perception of London’s Space. Interestingly, the Big Ben which is seen as the symbol of Time also turns out to be spatial. The strokes of the Big Ben, whose “leaden circles dissolve in the air” are suggestive of the effect of the sound of the strokes on London’s Space. So, Big Ben’s power as the reminder of the temporal movements depends on proximity. The nearer one is to the Big Ben the stronger one feels the temporal movement, indicated by its strokes. To those who are far from it, the gong of the Big Ben, diluted with the other noises, can hardly grab the attention.

Similarly, various individual perceptions of London’s Space also illuminate what London ‘means’ to different individuals. For instance, it is a pleasure for Clarissa to walk in London. Clarissa’s perception of London’s Space can be seen as an outcome of her social position – an elite, upper class lady. On the contrary, Lucrezia’s perception of London is influenced by Septimus’ mental illness and her loneliness. She keeps thinking about the liveliness of her home in Milan and of London, which seems lifeless to her. For Peter, who had been in India for five years, the picture of London is different from others which is revealed by his thoughts as, “Never had he seen London look so enchanting – the softness of the
distances; the richness; the greenness; the civilization, after India, he thought strolling across the grass” (174).

Likewise, the following lines reveal how Maisie Johnson’s perception of London is affected by the “queer” couple the Septimus:

Both seemed queer, Maisie Johnson thought. Everything seemed very queer. In London for the first time, come to take up a post at her uncle’s in Leadenhall Street, and now walking through Regent’s Park in the morning, this couple on the chairs gave her quite a turn; the young woman seeming foreign, the man looking queer; so that should she be very old she had walked through Regent’s Park on a fine summer’s morning fifty years ago. For she was only nineteen and had got her way at last, to come to London; and now how queer it was, this couple she asked the way of, and the girl started and jerked her hand, and the man – he seemed awfully odd; (143)

These variations in the perception of London’s Space show how the meaning of Space shifts from one person to another, depending on several factors such as their experiences with the other individuals or encounters with other Spaces. This also highlights how the Space accommodates different kinds of Spatio-human dialogues, which construct different dimensions of Space. Thus, these different modes of perceptions also reveal what Space ‘means’ to different individuals.

Interestingly, these levels spatiality of Mrs. Dalloway, is highly suggestive of certain important aspects of the contemporaneous Spatial Literary Studies. For instance, the place of action – a part of London – is clearly defined. It seems as if the narration takes place within these particular boundaries. These definite boundaries are suggestive of Literary Cartography. Robert Tally in his Spatiality (2013) states, “Like the mapmaker, the writer must survey territory, determining which features of a given landscape to include, to emphasize, or to diminish; for example, some shadings may need to be darker than others, some lines bolder and so on” (45).

Woolf also chooses and determines the Space of action. There are certain Spaces, which are of prime focus such as the Westminster, the Buckingham Palace and the Regent’s Park. Certain other Spaces which do not need
much focus – such as the street names through which the characters walk are merely mentioned. Besides, there are other Spaces, which are merely referred to such as Italy, India and Bourton. Thus, Woolf spreads a narrative map in which the narration uses different shades for various places depending on their significance.

As mentioned earlier, the stream of consciousness narration of Mrs. Dalloway spreads a psychological map apart from the physical one. The constant shifts in the narration which crisscross between the characters’ thoughts and action, between different Space and Time reveals the invisible interconnections between them. With these lines, one can make sense of these lives, as one does with maps.

This cartographicity of narration which highlights the spatiality of Mrs. Dalloway is one of Woolf’s experiments with her writing. She had a conviction that the existing forms of novels during her period cannot accommodate the reality of life. In “Modern Fiction”, Woolf discusses this insufficiency:

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being ‘like this’. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; (160)

This reveals her notion towards her contemporaneous novel forms, which cannot accommodate the “trivial, fantastic, evanescent” impressions, which form life. Naturally, a literary work which portrays these impressions cannot be linear and the narration has to simultaneous, which is suggestive of spatiality. So, Woolf’s attempts to compose a new form of novel to represent life ‘turn’ out to be spatial. In “Woolf’s Maps”, Armando Karacheo illustrates how Woolf’s aims to achieve a new form of novel lead her writing towards spatiality:

By the beginning of 1920 Woolf stated how she had “[…] arrived at some idea of a new form for a novel” (bell 1978: 3) that could “enclose
everything” (13). During the following years she endeavoured to achieve this, and to do so she included simultaneity, multiple points of view, and maps in her novels of the period from 1922 until 1931. Throughout the decade, Woolf gained confidence in their use and gradually understood that if the three of them were employed together, the reader could obtain a more complete understanding of the evolution of the actions. (2)

This shows how the spatiality in Mrs. Dalloway is the result of her experiments with the portrayal of Space and her aims to achieve a new form of novel to represent the ‘elusive’ reality and the nuances of life. Yet, her arrival at the spatial representation is not unconscious, for she was very much aware of the significance of the literary representation of Space. The following lines from her 1905 essay “Literary Geography” incisively demarcate the boundaries of real and fictional Spaces:

A writer’s country is a territory within his own brain; and we run the risk of disillusionment if we try to turn such phantom cities into tangible brick and mortar… to insist that [a writer’s city] has any counterpart in the cities of the earth is to rob it half its charm. (199)

This reveals her acute sense of the difference between real Spaces and their fictional portrayal. This also highlights the significance of literary representation of Space. It is also interesting to note that the term “Literary Geography” is widely used in the contemporaneous Literary Spatial Studies, to highlight the complementary role of reader in interpreting a ‘narrative map’ composed by writer.

Thus, analysing the spatiality of Mrs. Dalloway’s narration and Woolf’s convictions about the literary representation of Space underlines several important aspects of the contemporaneous Literary Spatial Studies. It has to be noted that Woolf’s essay on “Literary Geography” and Mrs. Dalloway were published during the period when the Spatial-turn and its ‘turn’ towards Literature were still far away in literary history.

According to the views of Edward Soja and the contemporary researchers in Geocriticism such as Bertrand Westphal, the era of Space, thwarting the hegemony of Time, dawned only in the 1960’s. It was Foucault’s lecture on “Of Other Spaces” (1967) which attracted the attention towards Space.
In his foreword to *Geocritical Explorations* (2011), Westphal emphasizes this and states that,

> The first half of last century was still dominated by temporal studies (a la Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, Georges Poulet, and so on). In localized spots, here and there, maybe some isolated names might be mentioned – Joseph Frank and his notion of spatial form and then Bachelard with his poetics of space – but for the most part, we would have to wait until the 1960s to see significant changes. (x)

Thus, this determines that during the period when Virginia Woolf composed her works, the spatial thinking was still far away. So, it can be said that Woolf’s literary representation of Space and spatio-human dialogue (with the awareness of their significance) precedes the era of Space, the Spatial-turn and its influence on Literature.

Besides, it has to be noticed that the legacies of the contemporary Literary Spatial Studies are entirely based on ‘reading’ which opens up new dimensions of interpreting a literary work. So, it can be said that ‘reading’ Space in literary representation led to the developmental stages of the contemporaneous Literary Spatial Studies.

At present, this kind of ‘reading’ is aided by the theoretical understandings of Space. Reading Spaces reveal the significance of literary representation of Space and its influence on real Space, the difference between real and fictional Spaces, the interchangeability of Space and text and remarkably, the spatiality of human lives. So, this ‘reading’ starts with observing Space and ends with identifying the spatiality of human lives.

Exploring the spatiality of *Mrs. Dalloway* just reveals the reversal order of this. Here, Woolf aims to compose a new narrative form, which “envelopes everything” demands the simultaneity of narration which inescapably turns out to be spatial. Here, it is her experiments with ‘writing’ which beginning from the portrayal of nuances human lives turns out to be spatial. Thus, this paper concludes that the preface of the contemporaneous Literary Spatial Studies had been ‘written’ much earlier before it was ‘read’ in the light of Spatial-turn.
References


Books


Market for Children’s Literature in Oman

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Abstract

This paper investigates the status of children’s literature publication in Oman. It starts with a literature review on Omani children’s literature, its beginnings and its current status as Omani writers see it. Then it is followed by the data collection where there are two methodologies used to answer the research question. The first is an interview with five people who have experience in the field. The second methodology is identification of Omani children’s book at the Public Knowledge Library.

Keywords: Children, children’s literature, Oman, Omani writers, publishing, children stories, library, children’s library

Introduction

Astrid Lindgren once said, “A childhood without books- that would be no childhood. That would be like being shut out from the enchanted place where you can go and find the rarest kind of joy” (The Guardian, 2015). Due to the richness of their imaginations, children see stories as windows to their own world where they understand themselves (Kohl, 1995: 115). Inside them are millions of incredible stories that have never been told because the opportunity is not given. Children’s stories are the tools used by adults to educate and shape children based on society standards; in other words, it is a children formation tool. Children’s literature is not only a mere piece of work that is meant to please children but also a perspective in which children can change their view towards life (Kohl, 1995: 23). While children consider stories as windows to their imaginary world, where they explore unpredictable adventures, adults consider these stories as a connection bond in which children can be understood and educated (Kohl, 1995: 115).

In Oman, some writers such as AL-Lawati (2011) believe that the onset of children’s literature in books written by Omani writers was in 1989, but before that, people exchanged these stories orally and stored them in their memories. In the first few years of the appearance of this type of literature, there were some great efforts to develop it by establishing the first
children’s magazine in Oman; this prompted the publication of a number of books by Omani writers. Apparently, this process is not that easy because of the barriers that captivate writers from publishing their ideas. Knowing the importance of children’s literature especially in the digital age where the use of technology is dominating all fields, children’s literature should be tackled to maintain a generation that values books and reading. In order to do that, the lack in the publication of children’s literature in Oman should be investigated and studied. The purpose of this paper is to trace the status of children’s literature published in Oman, to investigate the reasons behind the lack of children’s literature publication in Oman to explore the barriers that restrain Omani writers from publishing their own ideas and to find the appropriate solutions that can be implemented in order to develop children’s literature in Oman.

This paper examines the overall status of children’s literature in Oman, specifically the publication process in terms of the quality and the quantity of the published books. It also detects the importance of establishing an Omani children’s literature base in which children are educated through literature that is based on the Omani cultural values. The reasons behind the lack of children’s literature publication in Oman will also be identified. Further, the paper focuses on how children’s literature writers play a considerable role in showing the difficulties that they face when trying to publish a book or even to write one. The research points out the possible effects that might appear in the future if children’s literature remains in its current situation.

Children’s literature is important in the process of education because it is a combination of education and entertainment. Being a primary future contributor in any country’s process of development, children’s issues must be paid special attention. Their problems do affect not only individuals, but also the rest of the society. Conducting a research paper regarding this topic will guarantee better conditions of education to the next generations. This paper aims to assert the role of reading in developing countries, specifically when using literature to let children be familiar with reading. It attempts to spread awareness of the importance of having libraries in all of the governorates of the Sultanate.
Review of Related Literature

“Our constant, universal habit, scarcely changed over time, is to tell children stories” (Hunt, 2004: 27). Because of the changing concepts of childhood over time, some children’s literature remains for centuries and others do not (Hunt, 1990: 1). With this it can be said that children’s literature cannot be defined based on text elements, such as content and style as other types of literature (Hunt, 1990: 1). The difficulty of defining children’s literature is because of the variance in the purpose that each writer seeks; for example, Harvey Darton defines children’s literature as a book that provides pleasure, whereas John Townsend describes it as a book that a publisher publishes for children (Lundin & Cubberley, 1995: 6). In this research, children’s literature is defined as “whatever children are reading in order to gain information or entertainment” (Lundin & Cubberley, 1995: 6).

For many years, the purpose of writing children’s literature in Western societies was mostly religious in which the audience were adults and children. The authority of the church that Christians believe were the main topic that controlled schoolbooks (Stahl et al, 2007: 1-2). In fact, the schoolbooks provided for the children were prayer books, stories from the bible or catechism which is a list of church lessons that should be memorized; however, some schoolbooks contained some rationalist writings from the Greek philosophy (Stahl et al, 2007: 2). In 1657, the first children’s picture book, The World in Pictures, was published by a Moravian bishop who explained the wonders of the world through pictures and simple texts (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 81). Before that, children enjoyed reading some adult books, such as Aesop’s Fables by William Caxton (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 81). According to Stahl and others (2007: 2), John Newbery was the first to admit that children need to enjoy their reading. His publication of A Pretty Little Pocket-Book in 1744 was a significant development in the history of children’s literature (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 81). Newbery’s works were considered the foundation of children’s literature; especially when he declared that the purpose of his books is to please his readers (Stahl et al, 2007: 3).

In the 19th century, children’s literature in the form of oral literature was published as The Household Tales, which is a collection of German folktales (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 81). Fantasy dominated children books at the time and the themes of imaginary life were common until the publication of Little Women by Louisa May Alcott where she describes
normal human being behaviours with lively actions that children would imagine themselves in (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 81).

The 20th century was the foundation of the modern picture storybooks and the first picture storybook was *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 82). Children’s literature was influenced by realism. In 1960s, taboo topics such as death, child abuse and divorce were brought in children’s books (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 83). In 1977, poetry for young readers gained attention when NCTE established Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 84). In the 1980s – 1990s, children’s literature became a huge business where authors were paid more than $10,000 and this was a result of other bigger businesses trying to buy publishing houses (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 85).

In the 21st century, children’s literature readers became catered to adults more than children. A bestselling book in both children and adults’ lists was *Harry Potter* by J.K Rowling. Furthermore, readers became excited to read children’s books that were published 100 years ago. The old books were republished with new hard covers and sold in big numbers (Tunnel & Jacobs, 2013: 85).

In the past, the relationship between education and entertainment was not that strong as it is now in films and television; the early forms of literature indicated that teaching means discipline which includes beatings and whippings (Stahl et al, 2007: 2). The debate in children’s literature is between the pleasure and the desire to read in which some critics claim that people who aimed their writings to teach children were the ones who invented children’s literature. Disregarding entertainment as the aim of children’s literature, some rational moralists like Maria Edgeworth believe in the need of children who are able to read. Regardless of including pleasure or pain in the process of children’s reading, children’s literature is still a way of indoctrination (Stahl et al, 2007: 3). It is a powerful tool to shape children’s minds and teach them social, religious and political values. (Stahl et al, 2007: 2).

It is argued that there is “an interesting paradox” in the way children’s literature is written because it is supposed to reflect children’s perspectives and opinions; yet, adults are the ones who are in control; Although there are some children stories that are written by children, adults intervene and edit these stories before being published (Stahl et al, 2007: 4). Other critics think that with enough experience, adults are capable of writing literature
for children that provide them proper education and pleasure (Stahl et al, 2007: 4). In the 20th century, children’s literature writers took an approach where the theme in children stories is that children are secured because of the appearance of adults (Stahl et al, 2007: 5). In 1960s, adults appeared to be more important than children as readers because of the writers’ use of children’s literature as a tool to criticize society (Stahl et al, 2007: 5).

Meanwhile, children’s literature in Oman developed relatively recently. Some talented Omani authors were ambitious enough to write creative children stories. There are barriers that somehow prevented them from transferring their ideas into published books; this has resulted in problems in writers’ publication.

According to Al-Lawati (2011), children’s literature started in Oman in 1989 as a piece of work that is written and directed for children. Before that time, people depended more on oral literature and memorization when it comes to stories. In 1989, the efforts to develop children’s literature started when the National Committee adopted publishing two stories by two Omani writers Tahera Al-Lawati and Fatima AL-Lawati under the title Collection of Children Omani Stories. In 1991, the first Omani children play Love and Corporation Day by Fatima Al-Lawati was performed (AL-Lawati, 2011). The same year witnessed not only the development in children’s stories and theatre in term of quality, but also the first children poetry book which is Dewan by Dr. Saeedah Khater. The National Committee was ambitious to take further steps and improve children’s literature in Oman and that was obvious in the first attempt to establish a children’s magazine in June 1992, but it did not materialize for unknown reasons (AL-Lawati, 2011). Even with a workshop conducted by the Omani Cultural Club, some writers did not have that level of enthusiasm to publish their works. (AL-Lawati, 2011). Nevertheless, a few number of them published some stories, such as Zahra Fears Night by Fatima AL-Lawati.

Although children’s literature in Oman had a seemingly strong start, it did not continue with the same scale of progress because it depended on the writer’s efforts to produce literature for children (AL-Lawati, 2011). It is argued that the reasons behind this decline are the absence of publishing support and administrative barriers. AL-Lawati (2011) states that compared to other countries, Omani children’s literature has not developed in terms of the quality even though the quantity of the books was higher. What appears to be needed is a set of accurate guidelines to organize the
process of publication and there should be specialists who are able to set criteria to control the production of the books before being published in order to be assessed because of the sensitivity of the audience’s emotions and minds (AL-Lawati, 2011). Further, AL-Lawati (cited in Al-Mara, 2016) believes that press is one of the many barriers that prevent writers from publishing because of their strict opinions. She adds that publishing houses do not accept the writer’s suggestions; especially the ones that are established to publish their owners’ works. Although there are other publishing houses that welcome writers’ opinions, these are usually very expensive in a way that the writer cannot afford them. The change should be in the libraries that are rare to find in Oman.

Agreeing with others, Al-Harthi (cited in Al-Mara, 2016) declares that financial support is what writers cannot find, when publishing children’s books in Oman. She also adds that not being aware of the importance of reading for children is another factor for the lack of children’s literature publication in Oman.

Despite all these problems, there are still some efforts made by a few who still have the passion to write for children. This is evident in children’s literature conference organized by the Omani Cultural Club (AL-Lawati cited in Al-Mara, 2016). In addition, there is Sultan Qaboos Award to encourage writers of children’s literature (AL-Lawati cited in Al-Mara, 2016).

As a whole, children’s literature is a primary tool in the educational context. Children should gain knowledge through reading and exploring books as these can open wider opportunities towards marvellous future for the coming generations.

Given the facts in the aforementioned, it is the study’s aim to have an overall description of the situation of publishing children’s literature in Oman. In addition, the current study intends to explore the status of children’s literature publishing in Oman. It further investigates the barriers that Omani writers face when trying to publish a children’s books.
Data Collection

The participants in the study are representatives of writers who write for Omani children and a librarian from children library. Specifically, they are five people who are experts in children’s literature and have the experience in publishing children’s books in Oman. The first respondent is a university professor; the second is a writer, the third is a writer and publishing house owner, the fourth is a writer, poet and member in the Omani Cultural Club and the fifth is a researcher in children’s literature and member in the Omani Society for Journalists. The selection of the participants with different careers reflects the status of children’s literature from various perspectives of education, writing and publishing. For proper reference, the participants were labelled A, B, C, D, and E according to what was mentioned previously.

Two methodologies were used to collect data to achieve the research objectives. The first one is in the form of either face-to-face or email interview. The second one is observation which allows a general view of a children’s library and the books that it contains.

The purpose of the interview was to explore the participants’ views, beliefs and aspirations. They enabled the researcher to go deep into the details of the issue and reach the core of the problem. The main questions are as follows:

1. What do you think about the current situation of children’s literature in Oman?

2. Many Omani writers believe that children’s literature had a strong start, but it did not continue in the same progress. In your opinion, what are the possible reasons that led to this decline?

3. Compared to other GCC countries, what is the situation of children’s literature in Oman?

4. What are the barriers that stop Omani writers from publishing books?

5. What are your suggestions to improve children’s literature?

The following are additional questions for the publishing house owner:
6. Majority of writers claim that the most important factor that prevents Omani children’s literature from being developed is publishing houses. Regarding this, what are the problems that publishing houses face when publishing children’s books?

7. Is children’s literature publishing in Oman is a profitable investment? Why?

For question one and two, the purpose is to know what the writers generally think about the situation of children’s literature in Oman and whether they agree that the number of children’s books published in Oman is declining or not. By answering question two, it would be easier to get some clues of the reasons of the decline if there is a real one. In question three, knowing the situation in the surrounding countries will determine what Omani publishers, writers or even readers should improve in order to enhance the level of this type of literature. Through question three, it is possible to know the strengths and weaknesses that children’s literature in Oman has when it is compared to other GCCs. Question four is a direct source to know the challenges that prevent an Omani writer from publishing a children’s book. Question five aims to know how it is possible to deal with these challenges. In question six, the issue can be looked at from different angles. Since there are some writers who throw responsibility upon the publishing houses, the opinions of the publishing house owners should be also detected to know the challenges they have. Question seven investigates a different aspect of the problem which is the possibility that publishing children’s books in Oman is not a good investment, a situation that might result in decline in the number of the published books.

Due to the lack of statistics that illustrates the number of the published children’s books in Oman, it is difficult to know the status of children’s literature. In order to overcome this problem, visiting a children’s library and being in contact with the employees working there raises the opportunity to know the quantity of the published children’s books in Oman. Public Knowledge Library is one of the rarest children’s libraries in Oman established for the purpose of educating children and enhancing their desire to read. Considering this library as the database of children’s literature in Oman, it is possible to use it as a source to know the status of children’s literature in Oman.
Findings and Discussion

Through observation and interviews, it is possible to catch some hints of the problems regarding children’s literature in Oman. In order to have valid information, the data should undergo a process of accurate analysis where the problem is broken into parts. Hence, the data collected through observation, interviews and discussion are critically analysed.

Observation

In a phone call with an official from Public Knowledge Library which was established by the Royal Court Affairs, he says that the library has a few number of Omani children books. The official explains that the reason of the lack in producing children literature is that Omani writers are more interested in writing prose, poetry and biographies. Moreover, the children’s library area is very small compared to the number of visitors. According to the official, the number of visitors per day is approximately 50. The library contains both Arabic and English books where children can read with their parents. The number of children’s books that are written by Omani writers are only four; three of these books are adopted by Al-Habib Company and the fourth is published in Qatar. When asked about the reason for not expanding the area of children’s library to entertain a big number of visitors, she said that the problem is financial in nature. This issue has been discussed many times with the decision makers and the problem is found not only in Public Knowledge Library but also in other libraries.

According to the official, Children Public Library that consists of four floors, which was supposed to be opened in October, 2012, is not opened yet because of financial problems. Although the funds are usually donated by some private companies such as Suhail Bahwan Group and Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel), the financial crisis is still the problem for its stalled opening. The chairperson of the library is a British lady since the library is not governmental and some other private institutes have started to contribute to this project. One example is the Muscat College which has adopted a part of the library. There are some claims that if the library remained in its current situation, the Royal Court Affairs will adopt the project.
Children Public Library, which is the first of its kind in Oman, was established due to the rarity of children’s libraries in Oman. One of these libraries is located in Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Bausher. It is open only for children from the age of 10-year-old regardless of the fact that it only contains 150 books. The second library is part of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) Company and it is open only from 8 AM to 2 PM. The official declares that there are also plans of establishing a children’s library in Sohar.

This shows different angles of the problem that were blurred and not clear. First, the lack in the outcome of Omani children’s literature could be because of the lack in the libraries that get people the chance to read these books. Due to the lack of the opportunities that enable people of being exposed to such type of literature, publishing house owners think that publishing children’s books is not a profitable investment. As a result, writers will not be interested in writing books that people are not going to read. Second, the lack of libraries could be interpreted as a response to people not being aware enough of the importance of children’s literature. Similarly, publishing house owners and other private companies that may be able to establish children libraries will not take the risk of investing in a project with a high potential of loss.

Thinking critically, it is important to know the best means to engage people to children’s literature. This can be done through establishing a number of libraries that are specialized in children’s literature, but not libraries with only 150 books. Accordingly, sacrifice needs to be taken in either way because people will not be aware enough of the importance of children’s literature unless they get the chance to read it in libraries. This first step will encourage both people and companies to engage in this type of literature since it would be part of the Omani literary civilization.

The other side of the issue is the possibility that people are aware of the importance of children’s literature, but the problem is within the few libraries available. Through observation and investigation, it is clear that these libraries are not qualified enough for children; it is not even possible to call them public libraries. Regardless of the status of these libraries, it is significant to have children’s books that are written by Omani writers for several reasons. First, the publication and popularity of Omani children’s books will encourage writers to write about this genre because they will find the appropriate support. Second, it is important to cultivate the sense
of nationality and belongingness to Omani heritage among Omani children.

Interviews

It is evident that the respondents share some opinions in some questions, but they also disagree with each other on a few matters. When they were asked regarding the current situation of children’s literature in Oman, the responses were a bit similar. In A’s opinion, children’s literature in Oman started to flourish only in the last four or five years and that also includes the government institutes’ efforts to improve childcare field. This type of literature is taking positive steps in Oman where a number of writers have won some prestigious awards. For instance, Ibtihaj Al-Harthi won the award of the best story and illustration in 2015 and Abeer Ahmed won Etisalat’s award of children’s literature. These positive steps are also adopted by voluntary campaigns, such as My Village Reads and Noor Wa Baseerah. These campaigns encourage not only reading among children and their families, but also writing among writers in this field. Participant E also agrees with participant A in saying that children’s literature is witnessing improvement that has not been witnessed for 10 years.

On the other hand, B, C and D completely disagree with A and E. D believes that the status of children’s literature in Oman is really bad because people who are well-known in this field are only looking for fame with complete ignorance regarding the noble purpose of children’s literature. There is also lack of critical movements and specialists in this field. C asserts that in terms of quantity, the number of published books is really a few and these books do not cross the boundary of Oman. B also agrees that publication, in terms of the quantity, is really poor and the topics of reading that are provided for children in both private and public schools are usually historical and religious which is good. However, children are not interested in such topics and being continuously exposed to such books will kill their reading desire.

The interviewees’ responses to the second question, which is the reason behind the decline of the publications of children’s literature after its strong start, are different. A and C do not think that Oman had a strong start when it comes to children’s literature. C thinks that children’s literature in Oman has not started yet and publishing one or two stories does not mean that there is children’s literature in the country. Most of what is published in Oman and the Arab world is a translation of western and world literature.
A adds that the start was the personal efforts of some writers that were not funded by any government institute. Social media, competitions and publishing houses are what made writers interested in this field.

D and E give different reasons behind the decline. E thinks that this decline is natural since the beginning was intense. This period is meant to balance and reform the current situation and the upcoming product is expected to be even stronger. D, in contrast, thinks that this decline is due to the fact that everybody thinks that he/she is capable of writing children’s literature. This type of literature is left for less talented and untrained people who think that children’s literature is a mere story that is being told for children and this is due to the lack of critical movements that distinguish between what should be published and what should be rejected.

When asking about the situation of Oman compared to GCC, B claims that Oman has its own identity, but in the GCC level, Kuwait and UAE are on top. To A, it is not possible to say that Oman is the best nor the worst because it shares the same struggle among the GCC countries. He agrees with B that UAE is the best in the region when it comes to children’s literature. In fact, Etisalat’s award in Al-Sharjah can be considered the turning point of the history of children’s literature in GCC. On the other hand, C thinks that neither Oman nor the rest of GCC are making any progress in this field. The efforts made are only by individuals and they get no support or reward in return. To D, outside Oman, children’s literature has its special position and specialized institutes and critics. In Oman, this type of literature cannot even be distinguished from other types because of the unawareness of the standards needed in writing children’s literature.

All of the interviewees agree that there are serious barriers facing Omani children’s literature writers, and they should be taken in consideration as there are steps needed to be followed in order to improve it. A believes that the main problem is the lack of workshops that enhance writers’ knowledge about the way children’s literature is structured and formulated. Another issue that A raises is the writer not being exposed enough to the different genres of literature such as folk tales and world literature. B sees the problem from a different perspective which is the lack of access to information when trying to write a book or even conduct a research.

C, D and E agree that financial support is what most of the writers need. D asserts on the necessity of establishing an institute which is responsible of children’s literature and writers should be encouraged to participate in
international competitions. A and E show a noticeable attention to the process of illustrating children books due to the fact that images are as important as texts in children’s books. A also points out that awareness should be spread among families and teachers in schools regarding the importance of reading for children. A, C, D and E all agree on the need for a marketing plan that enables writers to introduce their books and enable the families to access and see what is offered in the market. B praises the good attempts made by some governmental institutes in producing children’s literature, such as the ones that spread awareness among children about certain issues; for example, using water and electricity.

When C was asked about the barriers that publishing houses face when publishing children’s books, she frankly said that this process is not easy. Before publishing any children’s book, there are a number of procedures that need to be followed. This process starts with creating an idea, checking and reviewing the used language, designing the illustrations that suit the range of age whom the book is introduced to, printing the book and finally offering it to the market with a prepared marketing program. The high quality of the published books, makes publishing children’s books expensive.

About whether publishing children’s literature in Oman is a profitable investment or not, C thinks that it is a profitable investment. Even if it is not, C thinks that children’s literature contributes in raising a generation that believes in the importance of reading.

**Discussion**

After representing the findings, it is evident that there are some findings that are similar with and others different from what some authors think of in the literature review. While Al-Lawati (2011) believes that children literature in Oman had a strong start and E agrees with her, both C and D do not think that there was a strong start. However, most of the interviewees agree with Al-Lawati that the current status of children’s literature in Oman indicates a lack in the quantity of the published works and it corroborates with the earlier statement. On the other hand, A, B and D think that even the quantity of what is published is not that good which contrasts with what is earlier predicted.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper features the status of children’s literature publication in Oman. It started with an introduction regarding the topic, a literature review on children’s literature in general and in Oman, data collection which includes interviews and observation and the discussion of the collected data and the findings.

The findings of this paper show a noticeable decline in the outcome of children’s literature in Oman. This decline is caused by a number of reasons that include not having enough financial support and qualified writers. Although there have been attempts by individuals to enhance the quality of children’s literature in Oman, these attempts are not enough since they are made by individuals and they have no government support.

Further research could be done to cover the areas that the researcher could not when conducting the research due to some issues. First is the difficulty of having access to data in order to have some statistics regarding the actual number of the published children’s books by Omani writers. Second is the difficulty of contacting the specialists and government institutes which are concerned with children’s literature in Oman.

This issue is important and should be put in consideration due to its contribution in raising generations who are fully aware of the importance of reading in building societies that appreciate knowledge. A country needs a well-planned infrastructure to improve its status in various attributes and it cannot be achieved without well-educated generations.

References


GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

*Oman Journal of ELT* welcomes articles that

1. Reflect the contexts of English Language Centers in the Colleges of Technology,
2. Find solution(s) to the problems of teaching and learning EFL in Oman,
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- Examining the issues from more than one perspective.
- Outlining and specifying the limitations of the main implications of theory for policy and/or practice.
- Having clear research questions.
- Justifying the data collection method.
- Having clear research findings, conclusion and evaluation.
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