

Religion in Multiculturalism. The Less-Navigated Landscape

Sara Mechraoui

Editor: Jennifer Drummond

Abstract

Influenced by the Iserian reading stages and the effects that it might have on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners' reading and writing skills, and the exploration of religion in multiculturalism, the present research is set to explore this less-navigated topic in multiculturalism. ESOL learners, as part and parcel of the American composition classroom, come from different spiritual backgrounds and divergent reading and writing skills. Our major task, as teachers in the pluralistic society, should be to maintain an inclusive environment for the less-represented population and the dominant equally. This research explores the effects of the Iserian reading theory and the Talk Out Aloud (TOL) technique on ESOL learners' writing and reading skills. In this study, the themes chosen for the students are based on religion in multiculturalism. Since this research paper is still not implemented, I played the role of a student answering some of the activities. The answers showed the significant impact that this collection of units had on me as an ESOL learner and a multilingual. It further suggests some recommendations for teachers aspiring to tackle this facet of inclusion and teaching composition.

Keywords

ESOL, English for Speakers of Other Languages, composition, religion, multiculturalism, Iserian reading, TOL technique, Talk Out Loud, Talk Out Aloud

Introduction

Reading and writing are the mechanisms by which we interact and develop intellectually. The emphasis on the reading response and how it is transformed into writing has taken many directions in literature and

writing courses. However, attributing a liberating voice to the multicultural, multilingual learner requires careful planning. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, as part of the diverse student population, should receive equal opportunities for inclusion in writing and reading courses. They should indeed be engaged in the process of acculturation through dialogue, monologue, and personal style development. How teachers should design lessons akin to the ESOL learners' intellectual and personal self within the academic setting is approached in this paper. In a sequence of lessons, the present paper delves into the less-discussed topic in multiculturalism with particular attention to the Iserian reading stages. My personal experience as an ESOL learner and teacher informed my selection of the reading texts and the strategies in this project. After exploring readings on multiculturalism and living the experience of a multilingual student in the American context, I decided to flesh out my insights into an instructional design on inclusion and teaching reading and writing. Religion in multicultural education has been the less-discussed dimension. In this project, which is based on multicultural pedagogy, incorporation of spirituality, religion, and oppression constitute the thematic background of the readings in a sequence of units that are designed and intended for ESOL learners within the American context. The objectives that are aimed at in this project, therefore, are divided into the following:

General Objectives:

1. Choose and level multicultural texts for ESOL learners.
2. Incorporate religion-awareness into multiculturally-responsive reading and writing courses.

Specific Objectives:

3. Design model units and lessons plans for ESOL learners
4. Modeling by choosing mentor texts that are thematically-inspired by ethnicity and religion.
5. Develop ESOL students' reading proficiency through the TOL technique akin to the Iserian reading stages.

The main research questions that I set to answer, henceforth, are the following:

1. How can inclusion in writing and reading instruction help ESOL learners develop strong reading strategies?

2. What implications, if any, has religion on multicultural pedagogy in ESOL writing courses?
3. To what extent can meta-cultural, ethnic, and religious awareness create a safe inclusive learning environment?
4. What effects does the TOL technique have on ESOL learners reading and metacognitive skills?

Theoretical Overview and Rational

Uncovering the mechanisms of interaction between the text and the reader has taken multiple directions within academia. Reading, as a dynamic cycle of intake and output, has predominantly intrigued philosophers, literary critics, educators, and the emerging cognitive and neural research-inspired linguists. Reader-response theory—or Reception Theory, as Wolfgang Iser prefers to call it—was the preferred literary analysis theory until the 1960s. The German psychologist and philosopher, Iser wrote *The Act of Reading*, and *The Implied Reader* to account for the importance of the interaction between the reader and the text. Unlike Hans-Georg Gadamer, Iser’s treatise is directed to fiction analysis, hence limiting the scope of its generalization to other fields of study. If Iser’s interest is in the interactional process that the reader generates while reading the text, then there needs to be an intrinsic value in the mental capacities of the reader that can act and react to the text through inferencing, locating, gap-filling, and replaying the imaginative and aesthetic value of fictive texts.

Taking the reader as a principal-agent in the realizations of the textual meaning and its significance, Iser devoted his two books to pinpointing the precepts of reading as an understanding model. Inspired by Roman Ingarden’s “schematized views”, Iser classifies the literary reading into three main parts, the “artistic” text, which is the author’s creation, its “aesthetic” value, which is achieved by the act of a reader reading the text, and the “literary work,” which “lies halfway between the two” (Iser I). He goes on to say that there is a virtual world, which results from the interconnectedness between the text and the reader.

During the trial of recognition, imagination, and recreation in search of meaning, the reader’s mind works out ways to piece parts of the text together in what is termed by Iser and Cognitive Linguists as “gestalts”; or “frames”

to use Ervin Goffman's term. "It arises from the meeting between the written text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience, its own consciousness, its own outlook" (Iser 289). The awareness-raising techniques that result from the theories can indeed open up ways for our intellect in a journey of otherness to accept and negotiate texts written about other cultures. "Every text read draws a different boundary within our personality so that a virtual background (the real "me") will take on a different form, according to the theme of the text concerned. This is inevitable, only for the fact that the relationship between alien theme and virtual background is what makes it possible for the unfamiliar to be understood" (Iser 299).

Among the gaps in Iser's reading theory is the role of selection and personal interest in reading. He explains 'expectations' and 'anticipations' without acknowledging the role of purpose and interest in reading particular texts (quoted in Hamilton & Schneider 642). If a multicultural approach to pedagogy is fostered, Iser's approach would favorably turn these criticisms to advantage. Indeed, readers tend to choose what appeals to their interest and that reading is a "goal-oriented activity", but by encouraging students to give life to the ideas in the text through imagination, perceptions, experiences, and to seek 'hidden meanings', they will learn how to secede from their reading prejudices. In the context where I learned and taught, giving the learner total freedom to react and interact with the text has limited dimensions. We were alerted against the use of personal "I" in formal academic writing due to the cultural rhetorical differences between our first language (L1) and the target language (English as a Foreign Language). Exploring the Iserian reading stages would be a concern for novice multicultural learners who are unfamiliar with it. As an ESOL learner, I was taught how to "identify gaps, locate information, ask questions, and revisit the text", but the whole process was done interchangeably without denoting each with a separate title. Equity pedagogy should tackle all facets of teaching and learning, including learners' rhetorical style choices.

One of the challenges teachers following Iser's model might face is the generalization of his act of reading to all types of readers. His theory is mainly based on the 'implied reader', a quality that is restricted only to a few students. If his theory is to be taken as a milestone for reading instruction, more elaboration on reading as a natural process that a real reader and a real

author negotiate should take place. This can be achieved through modeling the thinking process that the students go through as they read texts. It is equally vital to demonstrate an understanding of reading as a matrix of text, and possible readers, as Stockwell says,

...neither the text alone nor the reading alone, but the combined effect and experience of the literary object in the conscious world. It should be clear from this formulation that the most principled and direct way of attempting an account of what is happening on each occasion of literary reading must involve a proper knowledge of how the language in and of the text works and a decent understanding of how readers' minds work. (Peter Stockwell 45)

Multicultural education is an arena for negotiation, between cultures and identities; The reader-response approach is one of the ways that teachers should enact to enhance this negotiation, and develop a meta-cultural competence in diverse cultural student populations. Teachers following Iser's approach can "open a space in their classroom where diverse cultural codes of all kinds will be contested" (Roemer 914). Though it might be outdated, Marjorie Godlin Roemer's article on the applications of reader-response theory to ensure equality and cultural negotiation seems important to consider. She recounts an experiment using the Iserian-based teaching model with first-year students. The teacher that Roemer observed asked students to offer responses after reading the first chapter of Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. Instead of interpreting the whole chapter, they focused on the opening of the chapter, where the character was beaten seriously. Her students, instead of elaborating on the main events of the text, turned the discussion to the cultural negotiation of this particular violent act. "One student began: "I really was upset by the violence of his home." Another: "What do you mean, violence?" First: "You know . . . the brutality . . . when he's beaten." Second: "You mean when his mother whips him? That's not brutality. Do you think he should have set that fire?" (913). She further exemplifies from *Hunger for Memory* by Richard Rodriguez to showcase the consequences of silencing students "in which education can "declass" someone and simultaneously alienate him from himself and any possibilities of using his education as a transformative experience "(917).

Her proposal for a liberating, student-attuned, culturally-cognizant pedagogy that is akin to student aspirations--and based on the reader-response theory--is one of the ways teachers can pursue to take a multicultural approach. She concludes that "reading is not viewed merely as a special skill applicable to courses in English Departments, but rather as a necessary transaction we all hold with the world. Reading becomes the study of how we make sense of things, focused both on shared texts and on what we, as individuals and as a group, make of them" (Roemer 219).

Iser's stages of reading, which build toward making meanings out of texts by bringing the learners' individual interpretive readings to the text can be applied through the Think Out Aloud technique. ESL/EFL (English as a second Language in English speaking country/English as Foreign Language in a non-English speaking country) learners' "lack of experience with a creative, personalized mode of reading is compounded by the linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions of a foreign- language text, for which they are the non- intended audience" (Kramsch quoted in Davis 420). Therefore, ESL/EFL students should be oriented to dissect the text through a sequence of questions at each segment of the text. Davis, in his article "The Act of Reading: Pedagogical Implications of Iser's Reader Response Theory", details the steps that the teacher and students in an EFL context should follow to analyze a French novel. His main aim is to provide foreign language readers a means to voice their reflections on the text where the teacher acts as a mediator and a facilitator to the transition of meaning from students to texts and vice versa. He concludes that "integrating reading into the foreign-language curriculum entails multiple dialogues: between reader and text, between teaching-mediating reader and not-yet-competent reader, and among student readers. This dialogic process ought to make the foreign language more meaningful and, thus, make acquisition more natural" (Davis 426). In this sequence of lessons, the students will be trained to use the TOL throughout their readings of the selected texts. The lessons will also be supplemented with Iser's reader-response stages though they will not be explicitly explained to give students free personal style choices. As an example of multilingual learners, my analysis of the Marilyn Monroe poem, which justifies the implicit presentation of the Iserean reading stages to the learners, seemed different due to my internalized linguistic systems.

I preferred to integrate the whole process that I went through while first reading the poem, watching the video, and doing some research to uncover the hidden meanings that the author wanted to convey.

According to Lee Anne Bell, “Social justice refers to reconstructing society in accordance with principles of equity, recognition, and inclusion. It requires confronting the ideological frameworks, historical legacies, and institutional patterns and practices that structure social relations unequally so that some groups are advantaged at the expense of other groups that are marginalized” (4). Unlike diversity, which describes the natural intrinsic qualities of cultural and societal differences, social justice is a broader term that accounts for a universal interest in co-existence, co-operation, understanding, appreciation, and equal material distribution. Choosing appropriate content and pedagogical perspectives in Social Justice Education (SJE) is geared to “increasing personal awareness, expanding knowledge, and encouraging action” (Bell 60). Instructors should skillfully attune learning outcomes to students’ needs, perceptions, and aspirations, and particularly avoid content that presents stereotypical views on particular groups. Pedagogy-wise Bloom and Krathwohl’s teaching model appropriately addresses the learning stages that every learner goes through, Bell et.al claim.

Though realizing social justice seems less feasible in a highly pluralistic society, raising awareness of the history of oppression, Christian hegemony, and White racism is an integral part of taking action toward ourselves and our society (Bell 1). Instead of taking the literal dictionary definition of oppression, Bell investigates the multifaceted nature of the concept. For her, oppression is defined through its covert and overt features which characterize “it as restrictive, pervasive, and cumulative; socially-constructed, categorizing, and group-based; hierarchical, normalized, and hegemonic; intersectional and internalized, and durable and mutable” (Bell 6). It is through an appropriate and thorough understanding of oppression that SJE can be feasibly-enacted. Though I had a personal experience with religious stereotyping, as described in the following line, I was unaware of the terms to describe it, nor the origins of this impediment to SJE. It is true that my head covering was stereotyped overtly by a teenager, and another person appreciated and questioned my ‘good pronunciation’; but it all depends on my perceptions of acceptance to be part of the society and to take action to live peacefully

together. It is this attitude that my simulated students would be exploring through the proposed units.

Religion, as a spiritual part of human beings, constitutes a major element of education. Salili and Hoosain expand on the notion of religious intolerance that multicultural, diversity, and SJE addressed only vaguely. They propose a multifaceted approach that tackles the underlying cause of religious stereotypes; and by learning and opening dialogues in educational and workplace settings about accommodation and the assimilation process that religious groups experience. Hoosain and Salili demonstrate that religion is a strong force that led to conflicts and tensions globally throughout history. They add that it is the only issue that people die for throughout history, henceforth it should be addressed in multicultural education to cope with the diverse and complex individual spiritual and religious identities inside the classroom and institutions at large. Their proposal transcends the identification of stereotypes and intolerance to “an appreciation of the trials and tribulations as well as triumphs of different religions” (3). Hoosain and Salili note that religion in multicultural literacy is additive rather than subtractive, for it develops students’ critical thinking skills. As part of nonpartisan multicultural education, the religious dimension, when openly discussed, “is not meant to replace the student’s personal or familial religious experience...” (4). Separation between the State and the Church has problematized the discussion of religion and multicultural education. If a multicultural, social justice, and diversity approach to education is basically-built on inclusiveness and appreciation of difference, diversity, and ‘otherness’ (even if this last word is considered segregational by some religious groups if it takes a religious connotation), the spiritual side of the human education-bound individual should be accepted and appreciated.

Religious schema is the backbone of learning about and for religion. Psychological research proves that people develop this schema from childhood through formal and informal teaching. Through a repeated practice that is intentional or unintentional, the self-religious schema becomes firm and hard to change. That is, “self-focus increases the devotee’s awareness of other peoples’ views about religious materials” (Hoosain and Salili 6). This can be achieved through activating this

schema inside the teaching environment. When teachers and students call upon the religious side of their being, they strengthen their self-focus and openly negotiate it vis-à-vis others present in their environment. In the first quadrant of every chapter in Adams et.al's book *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, they include self-awareness, self-focus, Who am I? activities, which serve as milestones for recognizing the impact of stereotypes, privilege, and hegemony in society (182).

H.S Wilson advocates “an empathetic teaching and learning of world religions” (9). Loving the other neighbor in world religions is the binding aspect of all religions. Like educators, religions sought out ways to impart knowledge and contribute to the well-being of humanity. Religious leaders were and still are practitioners of thoughtful life values teachings and appreciation of human capacities of equality. Multiculturalism, according to Wilson, is a term that includes the labels “multiracial, multiethnic, multicolor, multilinguistic, multireligious, multicast, multiracial, class, and gender differences”; however, his approach to multicultural education calls for celebrating multireligious ethos. Although some multiculturalism scholars focus on teaching “worldviews,” as they pertain to wider populations including secular views (atheists, agnostics...), incorporating the religious dimension into multiculturalism should be enacted at the individual level. P.L Glanzer affirms that “educators must become conscious of the influence of secular as well as religious worldviews on education, knowledge and themselves”(quoted in Salili &Hoosain 12). In a pluralistic society, which many countries are experiencing, religious plurality is inevitable. The ability to accept the other from another religion or “physical and political outlooks” should evade misunderstandings that might arise due to the lack of, or unwillingness to understanding how other religions evolved, or what factors led to the superiority of dominant religions over others.

America prides itself on the many religious and secular beliefs that compose the diverse population. In the “Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders”, participant world leaders declared their commitment to collaborate with all men and women of goodwill “in pursuit of peace in all its dimensions”(15). Wilson’s framework of including religion into multicultural education looks at the historic teachings of faith traditions, what he terms the “Golden Rule” of world religions (15-16). His vision

for a globally inclusive pedagogical practice aims to teach the positive aspects of religions, which requires the appropriate choice of contents, teacher preparation, and pedagogical practice. Sonia Nieto contends that “Becoming a multicultural teacher...means first becoming a multicultural person” (quoted in Salili&Hoosian 37). Wilson also suggests that teachers aspiring to enact multiculturalism and religion into their teaching should be cognizant of the learners’ “concerns and quests” (37). Nord& Haynes further state that “One can’t be an educated human being at present without understanding a good deal about religion and its role in human affairs” (quoted in Salili&Hoosain 38).

Christine Clark takes a broader view of religion and multicultural education. Like Adams et.al, she questions the intrinsic patterns of Christian, white privilege in American society and worldwide. Her experience as a member of OHRP (University of Maryland’s Office of Human Relations Programs), which is built on multicultural-religiously-inclusive learning and work environment, provides insights on how educators and policy-makers can combat Christian privilege and White supremacy. The concept ‘Us and the Other’ is becoming problematic as it takes different connotations over time. Clark declares that “Us/them thinking is, at its very core, anti-intellectual. It discourages critical thinking and the more complex understandings of human behavior that critical thought helps us to garner” (171). Therefore, the aim of including religion should traverse the “other” us and develop participants’ critical thinking, “compassion, and collective self-interest” (Clark 174). Dialogue between students, teachers, and workers in the educational setting or the workplace is one of the strategies the author used throughout her experience. She describes the reluctance that Christian Fundamentalists showed to talk openly about their own religion because they consider it “a violation of their practice of Christianity” (Clark 186). This is one of the hurdles to multicultural education, she assumes. For a successful and inclusive education to take place, professional development-and dialogue that results in new insights about religiously-inclusive learning are needed.

As part of ethnic content, incorporating religion into a multicultural curriculum should be presupposed by a needs analysis of the learners’ interests. ESL/EFL curricular are already built on needs analysis. The four levels of ethnic content integration Banks proposes are: “the contributions approach”; “the additive approach”; “the transformative

approach”; and “the social approach”. In the first level, teachers should focus on “heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements”. In the second level, teachers can add “content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its structure”. In the third level, contents of the existing curriculum are “transformed to enable students to view concepts from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups”. In the fourth level, “the students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them” (quoted in Lim Na 12). If teachers want to incorporate discussions about religious oppression for adult learners, they should follow the last two models.

Within the classroom proponents of the multicultural approach propose an individualized approach to teaching. Teachers should make personal connections with students, communicate high expectations with each student, and listen attentively to grasp what the learner wants to say (Higbee et.al 23). The first two lessons are geared to this objective. The students and the teacher create a safe inclusive environment by creating their own personality collage. They will also be engaged in a group awareness activity through a model text. I chose mentor texts written by writers who experienced oppression to show students models of how injustice can be combatted through the power of the pen. The simulated advanced ESL students that would receive this intervention would get reinforcement through introducing the “Cycle of Socialization”. This lesson aims to raise students’ awareness of how socialization process takes shape, its sources, how it affects their lives, and “how it perpetuates itself” (Harro 46).

After this initial exposure to multicultural texts about self-identification, students will be introduced to the two novels, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *Love, Hate and Other Filters* by Samira Ahmed. They will also be watching a video about hate crimes. The sequence will be supplied by a WebQuest that is based on *The Giver*. WebQuests have attracted my interest in this particular project due to their positive effects on ESL/EFL students. It is also one of the strategies that motivate learners and increase collaborative and cooperative capacities. Ferris & Godar explain the underlying constructs of WebQuest learning. Four main constructs are developed in the learning process, “critical thinking, knowledge application, social skills, and scaffolding” (55). As a resourceful and challenging web-based means

of engaging students in critical thinking, WebQuests, according to Bernie Dodge, meet critical thinking development theories. He further claims that the “instructional goal of WebQuests is that a learner would have analyzed a body of knowledge deeply, transformed it in some ways, and demonstrated an understanding of the material by creating something that others can respond to, online or off” (quoted in Ferris& Godar). As students follow the steps within the WebQuest framework, they develop and manipulate knowledge constructs. They also engage in group activities, which fosters cooperative learning. Scaffolding is another benefit of the WebQuests. Each step is carefully chosen for learners to arrive at new understandings of the material and learning goals of the lesson. As I demonstrated previously, the WebQuest consists of a process within a process. The aim of this systematic process is “to transform what they read into new form” (quoted in Ferris & Godar 56).

Aware of the feelings that might arise in the classroom when the religious oppression and Christian Hegemony are introduced, students will read and sign on a consent form at the onset of the second unit, which clarifies group and discussion norms, and withdrawal from discussion options. Reflective journals would be part of each unit as they would help the teacher evaluate students’ motivation and needs. As Adams et.al note, “It can be easier to focus on the bias, prejudice, and discrimination experienced by marginalized religions” (287). In this religious-oppression-inspired sequence, I chose texts that narrate the experiences of oppression and sameness. There are also some recommendations for the teacher implementing this sequence of units. The latter should hold no particular preference or imposition of one religion over another. They should have resources for students to explore and learn about their religion or another religion but in another setting outside the classroom (Adams.et.al 287). Another recommendation would be to give the minority who show no affiliation to a specific religion the opportunity to openly engage in the “cultural bias against the non-believers in the context of Christian Hegemony” (287). The second novel *The Giver* by Lois Lowry centers around the “all are equal” under one rule, which can be interpreted by any minority group as oppression and deprivation of one’s private religious or cultural difference. Though this requires higher critical thinking skills from the participants, I assume that advanced adult ESL learners would successfully interpret the two novels due to the various religious and secular backgrounds they have.

Assignments

Lesson I Model Plan

Unit One: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)

Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)

Duration: 90mins

Lesson Title: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)

Students' Objectives:

Students will:

1. Analyze mentor texts.
2. Learn the ethical standards and the objectives of the unit.
3. Become aware of the intersections of multiple identities.
4. Learn the difference between personal and social identity.

Materials: White board/ markers.

Lesson Procedures:

Pre-tasks (10):

T (teacher) explains the learning objectives of the unit and the lesson.

T distributes a note on Ethical standards, which includes: avoiding the use of offensive language, respect for each other's' arguments, and the use of euphemism. Use "I" instead of the offensive directive "you."

Tasks (50mins):

T asks students, "Have you ever felt ashamed of your family or wished you were living someone else's life? What about your heritage or family would you have changed?"

Ss (students) answer verbally, and the teacher elaborates on how identity has become a complex concept.

T distributes text handouts.

Ss read silently.

T asks students to write for 10 mins about what they were thinking about when they read the text.

Ss read aloud their short paragraphs.

T elaborates on their answers.

T asks students to work in pairs to answer the following question: discuss the changes Granados's mother made to their lawn. Do you think anyone

cared what the lawn looked like? Why or why not? Why do you think Granados was concerned about what it looked like? Discuss your group's thoughts with the class.

T explains that writing in this session is preliminary. They should refine their papers before submission in the following week.

Post-tasks (5mins):

T asks students to read the handouts (Adams et.al 106-108) provided as homework. They should revisit their paragraphs and develop them into a one-page long paper.

T reminds students that they should bring the mentor text to class in the next session.

Lesson II Model Plan

Unit One: **Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)**

Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)

Duration: 90mins

Lesson Title: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?) (Cont)

Students' Objectives:

Students will:

1. Develop meta-cultural awareness.
2. Grasp the meaning of social identities.
3. Write a self-identification collage.

Lesson Procedures:

Pre-tasks (10):

T asks for Students' reflections on how each individual identity shapes the way they interact with the world. The teacher can model how it is done.

The Mexican student (in the mentor text), for example, might share how being biracial allows her to be a part of two worlds.

Tasks (50mins):

T Introduces the socialization wheel, and students revisit the mentor texts through it.

Ss write a self-identification collage (with particular attention on how ethnicity and religion help define some people from some cultures taking inspiration from the mentor text and the Socialization Wheel (Source: Harro.B qt in Adams.et.al 107).

Post-tasks (10mins):

Ss write introductory reflective journals on what they learned from the

identity exploration unit and what do they anticipate to learn from the following unit on Religious oppression and hate crimes.

Unit Two: Religious oppression/ explorations of religious oppression and hate crimes.

Lesson III Model Plan

Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)

Duration: 90 mins

Lesson Title: Introduction to Religious Oppression

Students' objectives:

Students will

1. Explore personal views of their own religious/non-religious experiences and perspectives, as well as with those of their extended family and the cultural context.
2. Recognize the impact of stereotypes and experiences of minority religious groups in US society.
3. Analyze Love Hate and Other Filters by Samira Ahmed through the lens of religious oppression.
4. Transfer input from readings to their writing.

Lesson Procedures

Pre-tasks (10):

T introduces the theme of the unit and distributes the consent form stating that diverse feelings might arise from the contents of the unit, whichso it is part of their learning process. T also informs them that withdrawing from discussions is acceptable.

Tasks (50mins):

T distributes an excerpt (chapter 12-13) from the novel Love Hate and Other Filters by Samira Ahmed.

Ss read the excerpt silently.

Ss haved a timed-writing activity (15-20 mins) recording their reactions to the text following the Iserian first stage of identifying gaps.

Teacher uses the TOL technique to help students through the process of understanding oppression in the story. Students should record teacher's modeling for future reference.

Ss in groups discuss their thinking aloud about what they thought about when reading the text; wWhat life experiences they brought to the story. Ss revise their first written reaction of the novel to add details gained from the group discussion. They should formulate questions about religious oppression and Christian Hegemony in US history. Ss can also explore social identities vis-à-vis religious affiliation, as demonstrated in the novel.

Post-task (10mins): Homework:

T asks Ss to read the text on the history of religious oppression (source: *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* by Adam et.al 257-261) to further explore the concept and back their paper.

T asks students to think of other types of oppression to be discussed in the next session.

Sample Response

Lesson I Sample Answer

1. Immediate timed writing response to the mentor text (True Colors by Christine Granados)

The generation gap is one of the most common topics that writers explore. In this text, the writer recounts her experience as an American and a Mexican. She first explains how she sees herself as American as apple pie. She then explains the juxtaposition between her mother's Mexican-inspired lifestyle and hers in El Paso. Granados recounts how she disdained the four frog statues that her mother put in the front yard, as they caused her to feel un-American. In another incident that shows the author's refusal to be openly identified as Mexican, she changed the bright yellow paint of their garage doors. However, at the end of the essay, Granados claims that the same experience she had with her mother surfaced when she discussed paint color choice with her son, but unlike her mother, she was compliant and pursued her son's choice. This is another indication that generation gap eases according to cultural heritage and how each one self-identifies in a pluralistic society. Why does the teenage author think the frog statues and the yellow paint in the front yard are abashing? How did she come to this conclusion? Is it a generation gap that led to the misunderstandings between Granados and her mother?

2. Immediate timed writing response to *Love, Hate, and other Filters* by Samira Ahmed

Reading the two chapters from the novel raises very deep and tense feelings. The main character Maya seems to be living an ordinary life like any teenage American girl. She enjoys friendships and learning. She also aspires to achieve what any other high school student dreams of. However, troubles are in her future. Those troubles originate from her religious affiliation—she is a Muslim who is stereotyped by her school and society. When she heard about the lockdown, unlike her friends, she was hoping that the attacker would be a non-Muslim due to the oppression that she might experience as her did family after the events of 9-11. After confirming the news of the bombing in Springfield, one of her classmates ‘Brian’ shouts, “It’s a Muslim terrorist, they hate America (Ahmed 148)”. Why did Brian make such a claim? Why was the teacher silent about his reaction? As events unfold, the students were able to leave school safely, but Maya’s worries grew. She has “waves of nausea” and refuses to eat. The suspected terrorist is a Muslim Egyptian who shares her last name. Her feelings of alienation and rejection intensify. She longs to be a “plain old teenage American (Ahmed 153)”. She wants to share the sorrow as other Americans do without being anxious, or fearful of being labeled ‘a presumed terrorist’ instead of an American. The feelings that Maya goes through are very appealing to every Muslim American. After the September 11th attacks, Islamophobia accelerated. The number of hate crimes against Muslims increased, and both overt and covert prejudice were witnessed among Muslims and even non-Muslims who were mistakenly-identified. Oppression has devastating impacts on individual lives and the community at large. Through Maya, the author brilliantly touches upon matters of concern to the minorities who continuously struggle to fit into American society. It is one of the examples of religious oppression that minorities overtly experience. What other types of religious oppression manifest in American society? How can minorities combat religious stereotyping and prejudice?

Implications for future classroom teaching

The sequence of units that are devoted to self-identification and religious oppression are designed for ESL students, as mentioned earlier. This population, which is presumably taking a combined reading and writing

class in the American context, would consist of various adult students from different cultures, with many religious and secular beliefs. Each stage of the instructional design should be implemented carefully. I assume that this would take a whole semester. Teacher expertise is very essential to this type of instruction. Teachers should be cognizant of the changing definitions of diversity and multiculturalism, and the different world views of individual learners. As Judith Stiehm asserts, “diversity as a symbol rather than a concept requires a new language and fresh conceptualizations” (141). The multilayered institutional population conceives and experiences diversity differently, henceforth limiting the initiative of social justice and “harmonious diversity”. Students, policymakers, and faculty have unique experiences of diversity. Age, social status, and everyday challenges have molded these experiences, and their share of diversity is restricted to what they visually-conceive. Although policymakers encourage diversity, they remain, observers “they have been and continue to be exempt from attempting to live it” (Stiehm 143). To this end, if I taught these units or any other teacher who aspires to indulge in this facet of multiculturalism, particular reference should be made to theories of multiculturalism and diversity appreciation.

For institutions, the implementation of these units should be first discussed as most educational settings in the United States abide by the separation between state and church. Even if the choice of texts in this sequence is neutral, some students or teachers would think it is inspired by my religious affiliation. Hence, the modifications might be to consider variations in the texts chosen. Any other minority’s experience can be incorporated. The objectives of the whole unit are raising students’ awareness of oppression and the multidimensional perspectives of identification. As I demonstrated earlier, universal human values facilitate interreligious and intercultural communication if skillfully-implemented by the instructor.

The texts that were chosen for this project would increase students’ self-identification skills. They also contribute to multiculturalism since “cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings...are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject” (Taylor 101). In future classroom practice, the lessons would be surely incorporated into my curriculum design. I would also transform the whole curriculum following Banks’ four models of designing a multicultural curriculum (1995). “Multicultural content infusion should be seen in every

unit, curriculum guide, textbook, audiovisual aid, and even the physical environment of the school. An infused curriculum should focus on where we, as a global community, have come from and what we have the potential to achieve in the future, including past, present and future problems, conflicts and triumphs” (Robinson 191-192).

Final Reflections

Enacting a multicultural approach to social justice requires legislative and institutional decisions, curricular reforms, reconsideration of teaching philosophy, and policy-makers adaptability; faculty and student self-assessment, reconsideration of teaching styles, and real-world diversity-awareness. For successful integration of multicultural approaches to writing and literature instruction, teachers--who are the principal part of the process--should choose appropriate texts that ensure voicing for every individual. Teachers should develop students’ critical thinking “and the need for students to inquire into why people believe the way they do and how beliefs affect people’s norms and perspectives” (Hoossain & Salili 224). Assigning research projects on the history of certain religious practices, religious stereotypes, and hate crimes can help eliminate misunderstandings, fear, and hatred that students might develop from media and other religiously-intolerant sources (for a list of guidelines to promote discussions about religion in the curriculum read Hoossain & Salili 232-233).

For a successful and inclusive education to take place, as well as professional development, dialogue that results in new insights about religiously-inclusive learning is needed. The aim of including religion should traverse the “other” us and develop participants’ critical thought, “compassion, and collective self-interest” (Hossain & Salili 174). If I get the chance to teach in the American context, for which the present research is designed, I will first strengthen my understanding of other religious and non-religious beliefs and how they affect students’ lives. As an ESOL learner, the books reviewed in this course spoke to me both intellectually and personally, my students would equally benefit from the selected readings, socialization wheel, and religious oppression discussions. Making change is the aim behind taking this course; so, it will be if carefully and skillfully implemented.

Conclusion

Throughout my learning journey in multiculturalism, diversity appreciation, and the social justice education sphere, I was continuously searching for content that would help me see myself as a multilingual and a Muslim. My choice to navigate the less-navigated area in the available literature on multiculturalism was reinforced with Adams et.al book *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* and Salili& Hoossain's book *Religion in Multicultural Education*. The authors of the works that I reviewed throughout this course showed the multiplicity of multicultural resources, and approaches that mainstream universities experienced, are experiencing or will be experiencing. By drawing inspirations from quantitative and qualitative studies, the authors develop an oeuvre for educators interested in implementing, investigating, or reflecting on multicultural education. Due to its complexity, achieving social justice by giving voice to every individual learner without hyphenating, or silencing the dominant is a tedious task. However, appropriate decision-making, thorough awareness of authority and self-efficacy, appropriate curricular designs, meeting students' aspirations in courses, everyday life, and the political sphere, as well as re-considering the fine line between disciplines can lead to promising multicultural education for all.

My exploration of the concepts contained in the books was implemented through the succession of units on meta-cultural awareness, religious oppression, and hate crimes. The units were thematically-based on the topics I described and linguistically-based on Iser's reading stages and the Think Out Aloud technique. Self-recognition is a complex concept, as demonstrated above; enacting a multicultural approach to our teaching or contributing to Social Justice Education requires a thorough understanding of our own selves vis-à-vis the other-selves. The sequence of lessons was limited to four lesson plans which are part of the whole design, due to the quantitative limits of the project--details about the other lessons were instead attached as appendices. In the sample response section, as I could not test these lessons in a classroom setting and as a multilingual and a Muslim, I am uniquely suited to serving as a sample ESOL student. The whole project paper was set to answer questions, as stated in the introduction; however, for more valuable and reliable data, it should be conducted inside real classrooms in the American context.

References

- Adams, Maurianne and Joshi, Khyati Y. "Religious Oppression." Edited by Adams, Maurianne & Bell, Lee Anne et.al. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, New York, Taylor & Francis, 2016.
- Ahmed, Samira. *Love, Hate, and Other Filters*. New York, Solo Teen an imprint of Solo Press, Inc., 2018.
- Atwan, Robert. *America Now: Short Readings from Recent Periodicals*. 11th edition New York, Bedford/ St.Martin's, , 2015.
- Banks, J. *Multicultural Education: Historical Development, Dimensions, and Practice*. New York: Macmillan, 1995.
- Bell, Lee Anne. "Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice." Edited by Adams, Maurianne & Bell, Lee Anne et.al. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, New York, Taylor & Francis, 2016.
- "Design and Facilitation". Edited by Adams, Maurianne & Bell, Lee Anne et.al. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, New York, Taylor & Francis, 2016.
- Chugani Molina, Sarina. "Mentor Texts Squared: Helping Students Explore Voice Through Readings that Promote Critical Consciousness". *The CATESOL Journal*, 27.2, 2015. Accessed 29 Feb.2020.
- Clark, Christine. "Unburning The Cross—Lifting the Veil on Christian Privilege and White Supremacy in the United States and Abroad: Building Multicultural Understanding of Religion, Spirituality, Faith, and Secularity in Educational and Workplace Settings." Edited by Salili, Farideh and Ramjahn Housain. *Religion in Multicultural Education*. Connecticut, Information Age Publishing, 2006.
- Davis, James N. "The Act of Reading in the Foreign Language: Pedagogical Implications of Iser's Reader-Response Theory." *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 73, no. 4, 1989, pp. 420–428. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/326877. Accessed 27 Jan. 2020.

- Deutsch, Nellie. *The Perfect Society! A WebQuest on The Giver: A Novel by Lois Lowry*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.student.htm>
- Ferris, Sharmila Pixy, and Susan, Godar. *Teaching and Learning with Virtual Teams*. Information Science Publishing, 2006.
- Hamilton, Craig A., and Ralf Schneider. "From Iser to Turner and Beyond: Reception Theory Meets Cognitive Criticism." *Style*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2002, pp. 640–658. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.36.4.640. Accessed 25 December 2019.
- Harro, Bobbie. "*The Cycle of Socialization*". <https://depts.washington.edu/graph/diversity/HarroCofS.pdf>, accessed 22 March 2020.
- Higbee, Jeanne L.et.al. *Multiculturalism in Developmental Education. CRDEUL Monograph*. Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis. Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, 2003.
- Iser, Wolfgang. "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach." *New Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1972, pp. 279–299. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/468316. Accessed 30 December 2019.
- Lim Na, Yoo. *Multicultural Curriculum: Models and Methods in Elementary Art Education*. 2015. Georgia State University, MA thesis. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1202&context=art_design_theses accessed 14 February, 2020.
- Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. USA, Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
- Mathew, Kaplan & A.T, Miller. *Scholarship of Multicultural Teaching and Learning*. Wiley Periodicals, Inc. 2007.
- Robinson, Malila N. *Reconsidering Religion: Towards A Broader Understanding OF Multicultural Education in U.S. Public Schools*. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, PHD Thesis, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f272/c9cb8f464260d5c056cc84109ef567a4fdf4.pdf> accessed 10 Feb. 2020.

Roemer, Marjorie Godlin. "Which Reader's Response?" *College English*, vol. 49, no. 8, 1987, pp. 911–921. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/378123. Accessed 27 Jan. 2020.

Salili, Farideh and Ramjahn Housain. "Introduction: Dimensions of Religion in Multicultural Education." Edited by Salili, Farideh and Ramjahn Housain. *Religion in Multicultural Education*. Connecticut, Information Age Publishing, 2006.

Steihn, Judith. "Diversity's Diversity." Edited by Goldberg, Theo David. *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. MA, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1994.

Stockwell, Peter. "The Reader's Paradox." *Pedagogical Stylistics*, 2012, pp.45-57. Academia, https://www.academia.edu/1524591/_The_reader_s_paradox_. Accessed 2 January 2020.

Taylor, Charles. "The Politics of Recognition." Edited by Goldberg, Theo David. *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. MA, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1994.

Wilson, H.S. "The Other/Neighbor in World Religions: An Exploration from a Multicultural Education Perspective." Edited by Salili, Farideh and Ramjahn Hoosain. *Religion in Multicultural Education*. Connecticut, Information Age Publishing, 2006.

Appendices

Appendix A: Units Plan

Sample Units: Religion in a Sample Multicultural Curriculum

Unit 1: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)

Week 1: self-identification through modeling. Exploring modal texts on how diversity shapes identities. Texts from the book *America Now: Short Readings from Recent Periodicals* (121, 126), and other resources for repertoire info .

Week 2: Students' reflections on how each individual identity shapes the way they interact with the world. The teacher can model how this is done. The Mexican student (in the mentor text), for example, might share how being biracial allows her to be a part of two worlds. Introduce the socialization wheel and have students revisit the mentor texts through it. Students write a self-identification collage (with particular attention on how ethnicity and religion help define some people from certain some cultures, taking inspiration from the two mentor texts and the Socialization Wheel from the diversity book.

Introductory Reflective journals on what students learned from the identity exploration unit and what do they anticipate to learn from the following unit on Religious oppression and hate crimes.

Unit Two: Religious oppression/ explorations of religious oppression and hate crimes.

Week 1: Introduction to the unit (consent form and religious identity awareness activity). Who's in the room? activity (282); Group Norms and Guidelines.

Read the excerpt or chapter from the novel *Love, Hate and Other Filters* by Samira Ahmed.

Timed-writing activity (15-20 mins) on reactions to the text following the Iserian first stage of identifying gaps.

Teacher uses the TOL technique to help students through the process of understanding oppression in the story.

Week 1: (continued)

Homework: provide repertoire-filling resources for students to explore history and types of religious prejudice/ oppression. Paper on other types of religious oppression in the community (group work).

Week 2: Viewing a documentary on hate crimes (<https://www.niot.org/cops/hatecrimedetective>)

Timed-writing activity (15-20 mins).

In-class discussion of students' collaborative work to explore other types of religious oppression in the society.

Unit Three: Hegemony and the melting pot veil

Week 3: Read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and watch film version (home work)

Timed-Writing activity (15-20 mins) or quiz

TOL technique questioning with students.

Homework: repertoire resources to explore religious oppression and hegemony from the book (*Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* by Adams et.al 272-273).

Week 4: WebQuest on *The Giver*, the ideal society. (<http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.student.htm>).

Week 5: Discussion of the project plan, students (a. develop an original plan for the context they choose: academic or professional settings). b. Create a diversity song or an article to be published or shared with the community.

Final reflections on the themes covered.

Final paper.

Appendix B: Group Norms

1. Develop the ability to acknowledge what you know, but don't pretend you do know;
2. Give others the benefit of the doubt;
3. Suspend judgementjudgment;
4. Stop making assumptions and go to a source;
5. This process is not an avenue for conversion;
6. Be sensitive to the closeness of the issue to the person and of the person to the issue;
7. Seek first to understand, then to be understood; and,
8. Make a commitment to your and others' individual readiness (Clark 198).

Appendix C: Lesson IV Plan model

Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)

Duration: self-paced (two weeks)

Lesson Title: The Ideal Society

Internet Site URL: <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.student.htm>

Author: Dr. Nellie Deutsch, EDD/CI

Students' objectives: (Students will)

1. Analyze and explore sameness as a form of oppression in *The Giver* by Lois Lowry.
2. Use and consult relevant web links
3. Transfer input from WebQuest to their writing.
4. Prepare a final team report.
5. Present their work to the community.

Stages of the WebQuest found at: <http://www.nelliemuller.com/>

Theperfectsociety.teacher.htm#Introduction

The webquest forms the structure, resources, and content of this lesson. The following excerpted WebQuest pages include key points to assist the reader for the lesson plan IV context:

“Introduction

Lois Lowry wrote a novel about a community that seems to function perfectly. “*The Giver*” appears to describe a perfect society. What makes this community flawless? How has this society managed to keep things organized and under perfect control? It seems that man has finally found the ideal way to live until one member of the community starts to uncover flaws.

The students are assigned by the elders of the community to investigate why Jonas, a promising young man chose to leave the community. What made this gifted individual, chosen to be the next Giver rebel against the norms? What went wrong? What flaws did he reveal in this seemingly perfect community?

Tasks

The Team will uncover what Jonas found impossible to live with and fix the flaws in the community.

The committee will keep track of all the information they disclose from observations and interviews in a journal:

<http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.committeejournal.asp>

The members will present their findings and suggestions on a big screen for the whole community to view in the main auditorium.

This will be done by either PowerPoint, video or play .

Process

The teams will follow the instructions as stated in the student process. The following guidelines will help you and your team:

1. Organize yourselves in teams of four. Find out about team organization and work on the following page: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Task_and_group_work.htm
2. Make sure everyone on the team has read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. You should refer to the story as you work on the project.
3. Read the Tasks above and divide your work among the team members. Each member will interview another member of the community and find out what happened to Jonas. This can be his parents, sister, friends, *The Giver* or any other member of the community you feel would offer relevant clues as to what happened.
4. Write your individual interview reports <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.committeejournal.htm>
5. The final product is a collaborative writing report that sums up the four interviews. The interviews are added to the appendix. The written report consists of seven parts. <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.writtenreports.htm>
6. Each member will be evaluated for both team <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.evaluationofthecommitteesreport.htm> and individual work: <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.individualreports.htm>
7. Edit your written observations and the results of your

interviews as a team. Check the team evaluation rubrics:
<http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.evaluationofthecommitteesreport.htm> to find out how you will be graded for team work.

8. Plan your presentation http://www.nelliemuller.com/Oral_Presentation.htm
9. You are encouraged to present your work in a creative way. You can use visual aids and other multimedia techniques like video, audio or PowerPoint presentations.
10. Make sure that each member of the committee is ready to present one aspect of the findings. Check the team evaluation rubric for your presentation: <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.presentation.htm>
11. The grade is out of 100: 25 points for the individual work, 25 for the team presentation and 50 points for the team collaborative writing report.
12. Do not hesitate to ask questions throughout the project. Your teacher and I will be available. Please use the following page to send questions to me: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Write_nelliemuller.htm

Resources

The Giver: Notes on the book

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/giver/summary.htm>

Utopia: A perfect society

Utopia by Thomas Moore:

<http://www.d-holliday.com/tmore/utopia.htm>

Definition and other material on the subject of utopia:

<http://users.erols.com/jonwill/utopialist.htm>

Utopian Studies:

<http://www.utoronto.ca/utopia/links.html>

PowerPoint assistance:

<http://www.powerpointbackgrounds.com/powerpointlinks.htm>

Free templates:

<http://www.awesomebackgrounds.com/freesample-ok.htm>

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/CT011323751033.aspx>

Journal guides:

<http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.committeejournal.htm>

Graphics:

<http://www.bellsnwhistles.com/>

Evaluation

The students grades will based on the following criteria:

1. Individual interview and report of one of the members of the community (25 points).

<http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.individualreports.htm>

2. Team final written report of the committee's findings (50 points).

<http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.evaluationofthecommitteesreport.htm> and <http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.writtenreports.htm>

3. The team presentation of the committee's final conclusion (25 points).

<http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.presentation.htm>

The team will present their findings to the class by audio and visual means.

- The team presentation will be at least 5 minutes long.
- One member will introduce the topic.
- Each member of the team will speak about their individual work.
- Another member will add the conclusion.
- The presentation will include both audio and visual effects.
- You may present your work by means of: PowerPoint, video, movie, art, poster work, music, or dance.

The team will be graded for structure and content:

Structure:

- Did the presentation have an effective introduction?
- Were the major points illustrated, explained and summarized?
- Was there an effective transition between the main points?
- Did it have an effective conclusion?

Content:

- Was the content accurate?
- Did the presentation hold the class' interest?
- Wasere presentation media used effectively?

Conclusion

Students will reflect on the following questions:

How perfect was the society in *The Giver*? Did Jonas do the right thing by leaving his community?"

Appendix D: Mentor Text

True Colors by Christine Granados review the entire text at: <https://www.texasmonthly.com/the-culture/true-colors/>

[The beginning of the article from the *Texas Monthly*, May 2014]

As a teenager, I held firm to the notion that I was as American as apple pie — even though, growing up on the border, I ate apple pie once a decade or less. The closest I came to the classic dessert were the empanadas¹ we got from the vendor who happened into Moe's, a Mexican restaurant in El Paso's Lower Valley.

Source: Atwan, Robert. *America Now: Short Readings from Recent Periodicals*. 11th edition New York, Bedford/ St.Martin's, , 2015.