

THE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON IDENTITY

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Abstract

The accelerating pace of globalization, the buzzword since 1990, is the cause of numerous socio-cultural complexities. Owing to globalization, literary texts have assumed a vital role to students' communicative and critical awareness of the world around them. Globalization shares with postmodernism themes such as plurality and loss of identity in mediatic societies. Narratives are a motivational tool to not only achieve comprehension, but also experience the writers' concern with contemporary issues. In the past, New Criticism boldly concluded that an objective analysis of text is feasible; however, the Reader Response theory advocated that readers interpret texts in relation to their own lives. Nonetheless, there are instances when a resistance to literary works occurs, particularly when conflicting cultural codes exist. Alienation— even self-effacement—could materialize consequent to attempting to create homogeneity and global solidarity. To postmodernists, meaning is no longer inherent in the text; the reader is involved in a quest to elucidate the textual material. In other words, intertextuality and deconstruction are at play since the content is a series of markings, and language is as an open system of signifiers that undermines the authority of words. With postmodernism, the reader is not a mere consumer but rather a 'free' interpreter of text; the printed matter is subject to a variety of interpretations. The effect of globalization on one's identity is crucial to educated minds seeking enlightenment. In schools and universities, instructors ought to employ postmodern narratives in their language classes to suggest alternatives and pose queries concerning globalism.

Keywords: Globalization, education, postmodern narratives, identity, plurality

Introduction

The twenty first century is typified by globalization that was promoted with the signing of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) to interrelate the world and promote a free flow of goods, services, information, and people across borders. The accelerated exchange has given rise to numerous questions. Potvin (2006) assures that globalization is a money-centered ideology, while to Khalaf and Khalaf (2006) it subsumes the entire world's intellectual, economical, ideological, and cultural compilations which results in socio-cultural complexities. Globalization is a major threat to the increasing number of immigrants worldwide. It menaces their identities and that of indigenous residents. This occurs when newcomers fail to integrate in the new society, or to create a new Self or identity capable of functioning in different realms. Educational institutions are vulnerable to globalization; it affects cultural roots and impacts "societies at the ideological, political, and economic levels" (Stomquist and Monkman 2000, p. 235).

In education, teachers are susceptible to public sanction if they do not meet expectations. Tatto (2007) thinks that in an overly competitive market, governments assiduously attempt "to shape their education systems to provide those skills needed in the growing global economy" (p. 231). Tatto also believes that reforms in education signify the creation of a novel concept of the ideal teacher; however, designing and implementing new methods and curricula is not a facile matter. Nevertheless, this is feasible through the establishment of accountability mechanisms that "secure compliance with globally determined

standards of quality in teacher learning and practice” (p.232). Administrators confronted global intimidations by increasing education quality through monitoring, accountability measures, and performance standards. In some countries, resistance by teacher unions and local controls occurred when an integrated curriculum was proposed for reform. Tatto (2007) emphasizes the need to work nationally through ministries of education—as well as globally—through lending experiences and research. She states that:

Within the context of the global teacher reform, accountability is a term used to identify a number of actions (accreditation, standards development, curricular change, high stakes testing, credentials, career ladders, etc.) directed at identifying and enforcing ‘best practices’ in teacher education, development and teaching (p. 235).

The complex demands in the global phenomenon demand a thorough teacher-training program in not only academic content, but also in judicious and practical classroom management. Effective teaching is the result of a “set of technical/practical skills provided via short training programs” to build professional autonomy (Tatto 2007, p. 238). The major debate involved is whether to allow teachers to judge students according to their professional knowledge, thereby loosening bureaucratic controls, or to move towards close supervision and regulation of teaching practices. In both cases, there is a need for progress towards the gradual implementation of redesigned policies that modify the traditional understanding of teachers’ careers.

Similarly, Leitgeb (2009) has pointed out that governments are confronted with pressing demands for better quality of higher education. Additionally, learners need to construct belief, determine truth, share power, and assume authenticity. To Carnoy (2000), “globalization enters the education sector on an ideological horse, and its effects in education are largely a product of that financially driven, free-market ideology, not a clear conception for improving education” (p. 50). In order to enhance the global competence of citizens in the increasingly competitive marketplace, learners need to exercise socially situated practices of learning to negotiate their beliefs, values, and identities. This is viable through the rapid technology advancement, mainly the internet usage that has eliminated world boundaries. In a study conducted on Taiwanese students in both urban and rural regions, Liao and Chang (2010) disclose how information literacy, which is associated with learning, was influenced by surfing of the net to help students “define, locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (p. 3867). Likewise, MEMON and Demirdögen (2009) explore how societies of the global era comprise the “knowledge based innovation and research oriented, technology driven individuals” (p.2553), where technology helped channel knowledge such as digital archiving methods for intellectual works. Intellectual property is an essential currency for global trade, and higher education institutions benefitted most from the IT e –infrastructure. For the past few years, scholars and learners cherished online access to reputable journals. The academic collaboration worldwide has “improved access to information and instruments, opportunities for research collaborations, easy methods of learning & training, industrial liaison with technology support, science and technology cooperation” (p. 2553). However, MEMON et al. express their fear of violating intellectual rights nationally and internationally, especially when governments do not secure intellectual property. To protect technology and knowledge worldwide, there is a need for an international body for securing agreement. That is, “intellectual property in technology based environments must be codified in recordable or storage format so that same can be identified, protected and trade under specified laws” (p.2554).

With multifaceted globalization, the question of multiculturalism remains at the heart of the educational reform. Freire believes that education could improve the human condition to counteract the effect of oppression (as cited in Torres-Guzman, M., E & Gomez J., 2009). Having different shapes and colors, multiculturalism ceaselessly affects “most of the decisions

that we face in dealing with the challenges of contemporary education” (Torres et al. p.88). For the last twenty years, we were connected to the politics of culture, to identify the importance of multiple identities in education. Multiculturalism has addressed the implications of class, race, and gender on the constitution of identities and ability to tolerate people of different origins. These theories aim at showing the complexity of multiple identities, promoting the public good and aiding individuals’ to build accountability towards the formation of their own communities. However, these theories were unable “to embrace a theory of democracy that ameliorate, if not eliminate altogether, the social differences, inequality, and inequity pervasive in capitalist societies” (pp. 87-88). Eventually, to achieve the goals of diversity and multiculturalism, universities should hire qualified scholars that assist learners to explore knowledge without prejudice, and approach work creatively and “a sense of utopian hope” (Torres et al. p.104).

A call for new identities

Maalouf in *Arab society and culture* (2006), insists on the need for a new concept of identity that replaces the former tribal one (p.90). According to Maalouf, those mocked for their skin color or slipshod appearance seek vengeance, which is often described or labeled as terrorism.. Humiliation and fears of existence result in fanatic, abnormal behavior in any society. When people sense a threat to their religion, nation, or community, they retaliate not as committers of repulsive crimes, but as possessors of a legitimate right to self-defense. These ‘heroes’ have either suffered from colonialism, racism or globalism that “turned the blind eye to the fate of their victims at least until rivers of blood have been shed” (p.89). Hence, Maalouf calls for a new concept of identity that accepts allegiances, rather than being reduced to one single affiliation that encourages intolerance. This does not mean the denial of the self as much as providing care for the Other to avoid belligerent or hostile behavior. Tolerance helps individuals transcend prejudice that leads to conflicts and bloody wars. Maalouf in his essay ‘*Damaged identities and violence*’ asserts that people do not grow aware of their identities because it is not “a pre-given and static phenomenon” (p. 89). He insists that what determines affiliation was not in us at birth, but unfortunately, tribal notion is still accepted especially in the Middle East. This region is caught in the intermingling elements of globalization and is facing the threat of disintegration. Thus, reconciling with the culture of the Other is urgent to avoid the feeling of dislocation, alienation, and instability . Said (2006) in *Arab society and culture* agrees with Maalouf and describes his early experience in the USA as “a hopeless odd variation of a human being” (p.101). However, he finally brought himself to harmony with the Other through constructing a new identity via language, which not only represents but also creates realities. This takes us back to Maalouf’s belief about the gradually built identity throughout life.

Globalization, culture, and self

Globalization, through its conspicuous promotion of consumerism, embraces a form of uniformity that dissolves cultural attachments, dissociates people, and induces isolation. . Media influences people’s lives worldwide, diffusing specious practices and values; consequently, culture, which one assumes is examined in relation to society, is determined by technology (Mellor, 2004). Media’s pervasive, ubiquitous presence is inescapable; the majority of the worlds’ populations are affected by it. For several years now, researchers have advocated the importance of media in conveying and interpreting messages, leading thinkers to believe that “every interpretation of anything is medially determined” (Mulder, 2005) In fact, media’s significance tremendously increased when it assaulted and discredited traditionally acknowledged cultural images. The potential effects of media on people exposed to diverse cultural perspectives are raising questions about the construction of identities

(Jensen, 2003). In fact, globalization has common themes with postmodernism since it implies an abundance of images, hyper-reality, multiplicities of identities, consumerism, and self effacement. However, the consequences of globalization might become beneficial if developing a global outlook and transnational competencies occur. In fact, culture issues are becoming increasingly significant in both schools and universities as the growing pace of globalization highlights a cultural dimension, pressuring teachers to acquire innovative practices. However, instructors may not readily have the expertise or necessary intercultural awareness that would help students develop an ethnographic imagination (Palfreyman and McBride, 2007).

Developing awareness of the other

With the increasingly competitive context created by globalization, scholastic institutions are under tremendous pressures to adapt their curricula and management to the newfangled global reality. Globalization is about bridgeable ideas that affect identity, cultural affiliations, and educational reform. Louie (2006) encourages multiple perspectives of diverse characters in multicultural class through reading about the Other. Nevertheless, resistance to literary works and alienation, which could develop into self-effacement, at times occur consequent to imposed homogeneity. This calls for more teacher guidance when student analyze a text from a critical literacy stance. Students need to consider various views and contexts, respond, and empathize with peers of different cultures to see the world with a different lens (Morgan and York, 2010). Banks (2009) claims that learners' thinking abilities grow as they relate to the world and are comfortable with those of different background. Similarly, Liang and Galda (2009) state that “when response activities and comprehension strategies are combined, classroom instruction can enhance student engagement and understanding of a text, enrich student response, and improve students' awareness of their own strategic reading”(p. 330). This language activity encourages students to transfer knowledge by reading, recalling and responding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2008).

Oppression in literature

Currently, there exists a reawakening of interest in the use of literature in language classes; however, the primary focus is on the interaction between the reader and the text, which do not possess fixed and final meaning (Finkelstein & McCleery, 2002). In other words, Literature could be an avenue for texts that aid students transmit their own interpretations, improving both their cognitive and writing abilities. Furthermore, learners cherish reading about contemporary socio-cultural issues relevant to their age and lifestyle. Using postmodern literary texts, teachers would permit students to comprehend the representations of their present society, which is characterized by media's intrusive pervasiveness. Reading and discussing current topics empowers students to write as productively as possible. Narrative as a genre is a relatively new concept in educational research and is associated with literary studies. The support in favor of literature in language teaching is progressing positively, especially with literary texts that transmit an abundance of perceptions and insights. Postmodernists emphasize text over-interpretation, and assure the interaction between text, reader and reality, as well as intertextuality, which “transgresses realist narrative conventions, disrupts linear time sequence, accumulates meaning through intertextual references to other writing and cultural texts, and creates self-reflexivity through its formal strategies” (“Literature and Activism”, 2007).

Teachers as value carriers

Since there is no value free education, it is necessary to point out to the role of teachers as value carriers. Weaver (2000) assures that teachers reflect a mainstream thought

and tend to reinforce their social values that make education culturally determined. Weaver explains this issue by stating that facts never speak for themselves, but are situated rather in a context that is dominated by societal values (p. 257). Freire argues that few people are exempt from oppression of one kind or another, and calls for a critical pedagogy where teachers provide academic needs, while allowing students a measure of smugness or contentment. To Freire, students need to “develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, institutions” so that they are prepared to be active citizens (p.160). Freire (as cited in Vaught, 2008) believes that the Critical Race Theory (CRT) explains “racism not as a singularly individual pathology, but as a collective, structural phenomenon that is pervasive, adapts to socio-cultural changes, is permanent, and must be challenged through scholarly efforts that disrupt assumptions of colorblind neutrality” (p. 3). Similarly, Gillborn (as cited in Vaught, 2008) states this structural racism mobilizes White supremacy, and assures that “race inequity may not be a planned and deliberate goal of education policy neither is it accidental. The patterning of racial advantage and inequity is structured in domination” (p. 485).

Freire (as cited in Billings, 1995) insists that education requires a process of ‘conscientization’ that engages students critically as they develop different perspectives of social and historical phenomena. Likewise, Kozol (1991) assures that teachers should foster a sense of common identity within students, while simultaneously nurturing a multiplicity of perspectives and unique identities. In other words, students must recognize their potential to confront the paradox of building a unified community within their classroom that also strengthens their self-identities. Furthermore, Bartolome (1994) has argued for a humanizing pedagogy that “respects and uses the reality, history, and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice” (p. 173). Because of race, class, or gender, they tend to be victims or executors. Reading Morrison’s “Beloved”, a postmodern novel involving black identity, readers/students could note the suffering endured by black Americans (or others of that race) who are constantly uncovering the veil of color that leads to segregation. Cornis-Pope (2001) depict the Blacks’ never-ending endeavor to attain self- definition and locate a niche in the world of the Other or Whites.

Owing to globalization, Yayli, (2009) illustrates how narratives assist students demonstrate their comprehension, since new literacies present new ways of critical thinking. Students are expected to understand how societies are built through actions and words, and consider issues about identity, and how meaning is culturally affected. In class, a teacher is neither a transmitter nor a facilitator but rather a mediator, an initiator and liberator of knowledge for learners questioning the world around them (p. 206). To Alvermann and McLean (2007), new literacies are about “the intersection of people, texts, modes, practices, and the varied meanings of literacy learning in different situations and cultural contexts” (p. 3). Kirby and Vinz (1988) claim that the traditional lens placed on literature focuses more attention on the writer than the reader of the text, which results in a mere concretization of the author’s ideas. This led learners to approach the intellectual rather the affective channel to pursuit meaning. Likewise, Rosenblatt (1978) believes that the text is a milieu for “sensing, feeling, imagining, thinking” activities (p. 26). Reading is an invitation to experience, to contemplate new perspectives of the text and be a co-creator of text rather a passive consumer. To postmodernists, meaning is no longer inherent in the text; it instead engages the reader in the quest of interpretation, which to Culler (1981) signifies the dismissal of formalism:

It frees us from the notion that the poem is some kind of autonomous object, which ‘contains’ its meaning as an inherent property. That notion has unfortunate consequences; it suggests that the reader, like a good empiricist, should approach the poem without any preconceptions so as to read only what is there in the text. The implication that the ideal

reader is a *tabula rasa* on which the text inscribes itself not only makes nonsense of the whole process of literary education and conceals the conventions and norms which make possible the production of meaning but also ensures the bankruptcy of literary theory, whose speculations on the properties of literary texts become ancillary . . . (p. 121).

Literature in language class

Iser (1974) believes that, there is a relationship between text and reader: ‘one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text’ (p. 274). Similarly, Barthes (1977) denies the existence of a literary work, until it is written by the reader. Barthes (1994) also assures that the author now is dead, and the text is a chain of inter-textuality. In other words, literature engages readers and elicits self-reflexive relationships between readers, writers, and text. In class, three central teaching models are applicable: the cultural model or Literature as content, the language based model, and the personal growth model. The aim is to form an eclectic approach that integrates the three approaches to cater for students’ needs (Zafeiriadou, 2001). In the cultural model, the researcher assists students to enhance their literary awareness by relating the narrative to the characteristics of the movement it belongs to; in other words, the texts’ social and historical background. This model acts as the relics of culture through which students appreciate other ideologies. The second model, or the language-based approach, highlights the language of the literary text to integrate literature and language, and permit students to produce meaningful interpretation(s). Through this model they enhance grammatical and vocabulary patterns necessary for effective writing. The third model, or the personal growth, assist students derive pleasure from reading and reflecting on their own life experience.

Literature and media

With globalization, media initiated a campaign that consisted of bombarding listeners/viewers/readers with a variety of oppressive images and representations. Mulder (2004), among other researchers, has demonstrated the extent to which media conveys or emits predetermined messages.. Story- reading and interpreting is a crucial factor in language learning because it is able to connect/interact with students’ emotional realms. Students, who are studying English as a foreign language EFL, may improve language acquisition through reading contemporary novels that mirror their modern societies. Writers such as Don DeLillo are concerned about the relation between media and literature. Students’ interest in the world of media makes *White Noise*, which tackles the idea of society with endless streams of images, an incentive to read and interpret meaning. In his novel, *White Noise* (1999), Don DeLillo depicts the dawn of the media age (Donovan, 2004). DeLillo’s narrative highlights the era of image, simulations and illusions. It exhibits the extensive pervasiveness of media on American mass culture. Bishop (2004) claims that narratives play a vital pedagogical role through the connections they offer to students’ lives. Narratives not only help validate the identities of the readers as writers but also provide a wider societal context in which students locate themselves meaningfully. Learners could have an interest in reading about contemporary issues that are relevant to cultural and social issues. Reading postmodern texts enables students to acquire a keener understanding of their society, which is mostly controlled by an inescapable media factor . Harlow, Cummings & Abersturi (2006) support students’ reflection on inner mental realities; this enables a vital engagement with their surroundings, eventually uncovering their true identities. According to Freire (1968), teaching should not be solely a banking of concepts; the relationship between educator and student should be a democratic one that promotes socialization.

Conclusion

With adequate awareness about the Self and the Other, the negative effect of globalization on the identity and culture of the marginalized would be gradually eradicated . In the end, the most frequent argument is maintained: Is globalization that casts a blanket of uniformity over the world, suffocates the cultures of the marginalized, and represents a ubiquitous threat that is the acknowledged, determining factor of cultural identity? What other solutions could educators and intellectuals propose and possibly implement in the global era?

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