Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences, Volume 52, No. 1, 2025

Deanship of Scientific Research

Challenging A Contentious Discourse and Dismantling the False Divide through Multicultural Literature

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Received: 29/4/2023
Revised: 22/10/2023
Accepted: 4/1/2024
Published online: 14/11/2024

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Citation: Qutami, M. Y., & Hamdan, Y. A. H. (2024). Challenging A Contentious Discourse and Dismantling the False Divide through Multicultural Literature . *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, *52*(1), 282–297.
https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v52i1.4754

Abstract

Objectives: This study examines ways through which Eurocentric discourse can be challenged to combat inequality and discrimination against “the other.” The study also aims to demonstrate the positive impact that literature and cinema, with their diverse cultures, can have in teaching students how to question European central thought by understanding the lifestyle and worldview of “the Other,” highlighting their counter-narrative, and fostering empathy and tolerance toward “the other.”

Methods: To achieve this purpose, Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy was employed to equip English language students with critical thinking skills to critique facts. Works of multicultural literature and corresponding activities were chosen to enhance the ability to disrupt Eurocentric discourse. Students' responses were recorded and analyzed to track changes in empathy levels. Additionally, through critical and analytical readings of literary texts, the study sheds light on social disparities and criticizes oppressive structures that reinforce discrimination.

Results: The study revealed ways to challenge Eurocentric discourse and resist discrimination against “the Other.” It also showed the positive role played by multicultural literary texts and cinema in training students to question European central discourse by exposing them to counter-narratives and the lifestyle of "the Other." The study further confirmed that increased awareness of injustice led to improved levels of empathy and tolerance towards others, inspiring a desire to contribute to social change.

Conclusions: The study contributes to expanding knowledge about using multicultural literature and cinema in educating students about discrimination and combating Islamophobia and “the Other.” This is achieved by involving students in the process of liberating their minds through questioning European central discourse and the prevailing narrative of oppression, thereby enhancing their sense of empowerment, empathy, and tolerance.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Eurocentrism, Justice, The Other, Tolerance.

تحدي الخطاب الخلافي وتفكيك الانقسام الكاذب من خلال الأدب متعدد الثقافات

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ملخّص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى السبل التي يمكن من خلالها تحدي خطاب المركزية الأوروبية ومحاربة عدم المساواة والتمييز ضد "الآخر". وأيضا إلى إظهار التأثير الإيجابي الذي يمكن أن يكون للأدب والسينما بثقافاتهما المتعددة في تعليم الطلاب كيفية الشك في الفكر الأوروبي المركزي من خلال التعرف إلى طريقة حياة "الآخر" ورؤيته للعالم وإبراز روايته المعاكسة، وفهمها مما يزيد من إحساسهم بالتعاطف والتسامح تجاه "الآخر."

المنهجية: لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تمّ استخدم أسلوب تعليم بولو فرير النقدي لتزويد طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بمهارات وأدوات التفكير النقدي لنقد الحقائق. كما تم اختيار أعمال من الأدب متعدد الثقافات والأنشطة المقابلة لتعزيز القدرة على إرباك خطاب المركزية الأوروبية، وتسجيل وتحليل ردود الطلاب لتتبع التغيرات في مستويات التعاطف. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تقديم قراءة نقدية وتحليلية للنصوص الأدبية،و تسليط الضوء على التفاوت الاجتماعي وتنتقد هياكل القمع التي تعزز التمييز.

النتائج: كشفت الدراسة عن طرائق تحدي خطاب المركزية الأوروبية ومقاومة التمييز ضد "الآخر" كما أظهرت الدور الإيجابي الذي لعبته النصوص الأدبية متعددة الثقافات والسينما في تدريب الطلبة على التشكيك في الخطاب الأوروبي المركزي، وذلك من خلال تعريضهم للروايات المعاكسة وطريقة حياة الآخر. وأكدت الدراسة أيضا أن زيادة وعيهم بالظلم أدى إلى تحسين مستويات تعاطفهم وتسامحهم مع الآخر، وألهمهم رغبة في المساهمة في التغيير المجتمعي .

الخلاصة: تسهم الدراسة في توسيع المعرفة حول استخدام الأدب والسينما متعددة الثقافات في تعليم الطلاب حول التمييز ومحاربة رهاب الإسلام و"الآخر" وذلك يكون بدمج الطلاب في عملية تحرير العقول من خلال التشكيك في خطاب المركزية الأوروبية والسرد السائد للقمع مما يزيد من إحساسهم بالتمكين والتعاطف والتسامح .

الكلمات الدالة: البيداغوجية النقدية، المركزية الأوروبية، العدالة، "الآخر"، التسامح.

1. Introduction:

Eurocentrism is an ideology that places Europe at the center of world history, regarding it superior to others, and so "legitimates expansionism" at the expense of other nations (Moghadam, 1989, p.84). By making European ideals and values the standard by which success, civilization, and development are measured, non-European cultures, histories, and knowledge are marginalized and ignored. Imperialist and colonial ideology "have ingrained the notion of Eurocentrism in the consciousness of the world as a normal and 'right' way of seeing," hence, everything in the world is seen through the Western viewpoint (Burney, 2012, p. 144). Accordingly, non-western knowledge and way of thinking are disregarded and rejected while anything western is held with utmost respect. In this study, non- western knowledge and perspectives are highlighted and addressed within the classroom. By learning new ways of seeing the world through literature, students become aware of the inequalities and injustices caused by Eurocentrism. One way to combat the practice of "othering" and reduce discrimination is to encourage students to think critically, and to identify, and question dominant narratives of oppression.

The purpose of this study is to provide selections of multicultural literature and corresponding activities to enhance the ability to question and unsettle Eurocentric discourse, develop an understanding of other perspectives, and increase empathy and tolerance of "the other" through examining characters' lives and experiences within their marginalized communities. To achieve this goal, certain texts and films were selected due to the nature of the conflict each one represents whether it involved colonization as in "The Guest" and "The Museum" or assimilation and Islamophobia as in "My Son the Fanatic," or the racial tensions in the films. The study starts by contextualizing Eurocentric thought and connects it to world events. Then it outlines some theoretical considerations about critical pedagogy and multicultural literature. In the next part, it provides the procedures followed in teaching the literary texts and sheds light on Eurocentric discourse and the practice of "othering" within the texts and films under discussion. Finally, it ends with conclusions that were drawn from student feedback and that reinforce the goals this study attempted to achieve

2. Contextualizing Eurocentrism and Linking it to Current World Events

Eurocentric discourse has divided the world into superior and inferior nations leading to racism and inequality that have been normalized and it has influenced all aspects of life from culture, economics, the media, politics, and education. Hostettler (2013) states that within Eurocentric discourse, "European civilization is represented as truly human, [and] as the highest point of human achievement" (p. 49). This belief in the West's moral superiority is at the heart of Eurocentrism, placing the rest of the world at the bottom of the human civilization hierarchy. It also overlooks other nations' rich histories and contributions to world development and their knowledge production. Orientalist and Eurocentric discourses homogenize the third world, attaching negative meanings to non-European and Arab/Islamic thoughts and cultures, portraying their people as primitive, violent, unintelligent, and incapable of progress. These imperialist discourses, according to Said (2003, as cited in Ashutosh & Winders, 2009) have made the Orient "an antagonistic and inferior antonym of the West" that functioned as "Europe's "silent Other;" unfortunately, making the "actual knowing of the "real" Orient nearly impossible" (p. 550). Hostettler (2013) declares:

To be labelled as 'Oriental'… can mean being assigned a fictive otherness, one that poses a problem to be resolved through its negation: the elimination of the non-European in ways ranging from Europeanization to extermination (p. 49)

This hate-filled rhetoric and negative sentiments have not been condemned by the mainstream and have been passed down from one generation to another. Historically, transgressions committed by White supremacists have been mostly excused when it came to the Orient. However, offenses against other cultural or religious groups have not been treated the same way. Said (1997) explains that:

There … seems to have been a strange revival of canonical, though previously discredited, orientalist ideas about Muslim, generally nonwhite, people--ideas that have achieved a startling prominence at a time when racial or religious misrepresentations of every other cultural group are no longer circulated with such impunity. Malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about Muslim

mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians. (p. xixii).

Ironically, Said's book appeared in 1997. However, racism against other minorities resurfaced during Covid- 19, which became visible through George Floyd's killing and the numerous attacks on Asians in the USA. These various acts of violence against non- White cultures necessitate a careful examination of the effect of Eurocentric discourse on the marginalized and the mainstream, and the role multicultural literature can play in combatting it. Current world events can be discussed in the English class to contextualize the problem and understand the origin of racism and discrimination against "the other."

Hate crimes within the US and elsewhere are constant reminders of racism and antagonism against "the other" embedded within Eurocentric discourse. However, American society failed to see the way the discourse has been normalized along with its impact on race relations. Erica Childs (2008) explains that many believe in the colorblind approach, especially in the media, as it presents interracial marriages as proof of America moving beyond race. This has made racism barely visible because society refuses to "see" color. This has been problematic since issues of inequality cannot be resolved due to the colorblind ideology, which eliminates difference under claims of a single human race, and disguises the power dynamics with which race relations are handled (Childs, 2008, p. 2772). Nevertheless, there is evidence that racism and discrimination still exist in the 21st century and that the colorblind argument has been undermined by recent world events such as George Floyd's incident in the US, the massacre of Muslims in New Zealand, and the hate crimes against Asians during Covid- 19.

George Floyd, an African- American, was killed in 2020 by a white male officer who had his knee pressed against his neck for nine minutes. ("How George Floyd Died and What Happened Next," 2022). This occurred in spite of Floyd's pleading to be left alone as he could not breathe, but his pleading did not stop the officer from killing him. This crime made it to the media and led to many protests against police brutality throughout the USA. This act of violence is caused by a history of slavery and discrimination against African–Americans. Such discrimination resulted from the Eurocentric belief of the inferiority and savagery of the Black race that prevailed during colonial times and left its mark on modern society.

Another attack that reflects the impact of Eurocentric discourse on attitudes toward other religions is the 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. A white male shot worshippers at a mosque, including men, women, and children and then drove off to another mosque 5 kilometers away, and killed and injured many while live-streaming his heinous act on Facebook. The mass shootings resulted in 49 people being killed and 48 wounded. The live-streaming of the attack continued for 17 minutes. According to BBC Asia, the 28-year-old man started to plan for the attack after he had visited Europe in 2017 and was provoked by France's "rallying cry for European anti-immigration extremists" (Christchurch Shootings, 2019). Clearly, Islamophobia was the root cause of the attack that is based on ungrounded hate and fear of Muslims. Furthermore, the Asian American community has suffered from numerous attacks during Covid- 19. BBC News reported that "An elderly Thai immigrant dies after being shoved to the ground. A Filipino-American … slashed in the face with a box cutter. A Chinese woman is … set on fire. Eight people are killed in a shooting rampage across three Asian spas …" (Cabral, 2021). These crimes are among many others that have not been reported because of the language barrier. The impact of such hate crimes cannot be underestimated, as millions of people around the world have been directly or indirectly affected by them. In fact, studies suggest a strong connection between experiences of discrimination and heightened mental stress, depression, and poor well-being (Lohaus et al., 2006). Therefore, they should be addressed through the educational system that needs reform and revolves around Eurocentric knowledge and the Western canon that privileges the story of the White man, and spreads misinformation about other ethnicities. By using multicultural literature in teaching English, "other" voices and alternate narratives are heard reflecting diversity in the world. Once such plurality and multiculturalism are normalized, perhaps future racial conflicts can be prevented.

Linda Christensen (2017), an American educator, warns parents and society in general of the world children are taught through movies, cartoons, and children's books. She refers to the "secret education," a term she borrows from Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman, children receive about race, class, gender, and domination from these sources at an early age, and the way they learn to accept the world introduced to them through the selected material. Unfortunately, children are exposed

to racism and misinformation about people from different cultural backgrounds during their preschool years. Beverly Tatum (2017, as cited in Christensen, 2017) explains:

Most of the early information we receive about "others"—people racially, religiously, or socioeconomically different from ourselves—does not come as a result of firsthand experience. The secondhand information we receive has often been distorted, shaped by cultural stereotypes, and left incomplete . . . Cartoon images, in particular the Disney movie Peter Pan, were cited by the children [in a research study] as their No. 1 source of information. At the age of 3, these children had a set of stereotypes in place.

Children internalize the stereotypes and negative portrayals of "the other" that become part of the accepted knowledge that is pervasive and not being questioned. These influences of Eurocentric thought continue to prevail as society avoids having uncomfortable discussions about race, religion, or power. Dressel (2005) considers the lack of conversations about race and controversial issues "a structured absence" of discussion and holds parents and teachers responsible for the outcome. "It is the learning community within schools— teachers, parents, and students—that is most often responsible for perpetuating racism, and they do so by not talking about things" (Dressel, 2005, p. 753). The current study aims to answer the following research questions:

1- How can multicultural literature be incorporated into our teaching to engage students in the process of unsettling Eurocentric discourse?
2- How does an understanding of Eurocentric discourse and its history play a role in increasing tolerance of "the other"?

3. Theoretical Framework

In examining Eurocentric discourse, Critical Pedagogy is adopted as a theoretical framework that works towards producing citizens of change who disrupt the status quo through speaking up against oppression and inequality. Paulo Freire, the founder of critical pedagogy, believed that through learning, students become critical thinkers who raise questions, analyze, practice common sense, develop into agents of social change, and feel responsible as informed citizens (Freire, 2000). In adopting critical pedagogy in the classroom, it helps students learn to read the world critically and understand the way power works "through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts and seeks to constitute students as informed subjects and social agents" (Giroux, 2010, p. 717). It exposes them to multiple ways of seeing the world and alternative realities that lead them to make better moral judgements. It enables them to develop a sense of responsibility toward others in light of the knowledge they gain (Giroux, 2010, p. 717).

Critical pedagogy is concerned with providing students with the skills and knowledge needed "to expand their capacities first to question the deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate … disempowering social practices structuring every aspect of society and then to take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit" (Giroux, 2010, 718). Once students learn to think critically, they become more able to recognize Eurocentric discourse and its manifestations in politics, media, and education. They learn to see through the inequalities and Islamophobic rhetoric it has created and reinforced in the 21st century. They start to question its representation of "the other" and become skeptical about western narratives of them and their cultures and history. They no longer accept the "universality" of Western knowledge or perceive the West as the only source of reliable information. Unlearning preconceived notions about "the other" prepare them to consider opposing views. It provides them with a different lens through which other races and nations are seen that does not involve polarization or the "us" and "them" dichotomy. Research finds that exposing students to other cultures and religions can reduce intolerance (UNESCO. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights & Council of Europe, 2011). When students learn about diverse societies, their lived experiences, and worldviews, their empathy toward others will grow, and so will their awareness of social issues and justice (Newstreet et al., 2019). In exploring texts from multiple perspectives and examining world issues represented as agents of change, students are inspired to address their biases and those beyond the classroom. According to critical pedagogy, when students learn to detect and critique inequalities and dominant ideologies affecting the marginalized, they can change their present realities and contribute to justice. According

to Cai (2002) the goals that can be achieved by incorporating multicultural literature into the curriculum are:

To challenge the dominant ideologies, affirm the values and experiences of historically underrepresented cultures, foster acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, develop sensitivity to social inequalities, and encourage the transformation of the self and society. (p. 134)

Christensen (2017) has worked on social justice issues and improved her students' critical thinking skills by exposing them to literature and cartoons to teach them to critique representations of imperialism, racism, inequality, and xenophobia. She helped them question prevalent patterns regarding portrayals of marginalized communities. Her research indicates that her students responded positively yet differently to class material. Some noticed the language that is used to belittle people from a different ethnic background, their dialect that is regarded as inferior to others, or the kind of roles characters are given whether they represent the mainstream or the marginalized. Some students focused on issues of gender and race combined, while others paid attention to color. For instance, some noticed that cartoon villains are portrayed as having dark skin and growing darker when they are involved in an evil act, and lighting and music are used in such scenes to create fear. Christensen (2017) found her experience successful as she provided her students with the tools to critique the images with which they were constantly bombarded. This helped them become critical of the world created by Eurocentric discourse. This experience is crucial as their critical thinking abilities were put to the test in the real world outside the classroom environment, and the learning that took place through literature and cartoons gained more significance and relevance to the real world.

4. Discussion:

4.1. Combatting the Normalization of "Othering" through Multicultural Literature

Students have received a Eurocentric education that normalizes the White figures' dominance, especially in the English classroom. This kind of education is a problem for minority students when they cannot relate to the figures or the content taught since references to their cultures are often negative. Exposure to distorted information or decontextualized historical events makes these students feel discriminated against and rejected. Experiencing these sentiments contradicts the goal of providing students with a safe and inclusive learning environment. Discussions under these circumstances become counter-productive, and learning is no longer a positive experience. This challenge can be addressed through multicultural literature that unsettles Eurocentric rhetoric and presents narratives of "the other" through which students can see themselves. Teaching literature can effectively reduce the gap between students of various ethnic backgrounds and the mainstream as they learn about each other's worlds. Lynch-Brown et al. (2011) assert that "Literature provides a window to ethnic and global cultures through in-depth inquiries into a particular culture and the integration of multiple cultural perspectives into every classroom study" (p. 215). This is important as students realize that the knowledge they acquired about other cultures is not mere theory but can be used daily.

In addition, when students can draw connections between conflicts and themes in multicultural literature and global issues, it enhances their ability to comprehend and analyze current events (Norton, 2005). Such connections help them understand how certain inequalities came about and contextualize current world struggles. Reading multicultural literature also heightens students' awareness of "other" values and belief systems (Evans, 2010). Monobe & Son (2014) also confirm that when students identify others as they vicariously experience their feelings and suffering through multicultural literature, they eventually arrive at an improved understanding of the global community and become better equipped to look at the world with a critical eye. Multicultural literature and counter-narratives provide different versions of the truth and stories beyond the typical master- narrative of the White man. This allows students to question their previous knowledge and ways of seeing "the other." They learn about struggles and challenges that differ from their own and start to understand the position of privilege or lack of it within their communities. Multicultural literature introduces students to characters who come from various cultural backgrounds. However, instead of being demonized or inferiorized by Eurocentric ideals, they are portrayed positively as humans with dignity and universal concerns. Their counter-narratives unsettle Eurocentric discourse by uncovering facts and histories ignored or erased by hegemonic powers with an imperialist agenda. In

discussing the role of reading fiction in changing and improving attitudes toward others, Olhova et al. (2023) explains that:

Vicarious contact may occur, for example, via reading books in which readers observe the main characters experiencing positive contact with different groups. The hero of the story acts as a fictional friend and role model for the reader, and because of the hero's friendly behaviour towards members of other groups, the story provides the reader with indirect contact. The desired outcome is the transfer of this positive vicarious experience with the representative of an out-group member, to the whole out-group. (p. 83)

In this way, the hero in the story becomes the reader's role model and so his/ her positive behavior toward "the other" sets an example for the public to emulate in their relations with other cultural groups. Another study supporting this view is by Green et al. (2004) who asserts that as students read stories, they leave their own world and are transported into the story's and this leads them to sympathize with the characters and consider their perspectives and values. This reading experience allows them to open up to opposing views or new perspectives they may have come across for the first time. It does not just provide them with a learning experience but a new way of seeing and thinking thereby increasing their level of tolerance and acceptance of "the other." Emphasizing readers' similarities with characters is also crucial to reduce the divide between cultures and encourage objectivity in the way "the other" is viewed be it a Muslim, an African, Asian or any marginalized group. Newstreet et al. (2019) strongly argues that "As students better understand and learn to empathize with diverse others, realizing people share more connections than differences, we reduce the likelihood that Islamophobia will exist in our classrooms and in our society" (p.9).

Multicultural literature has often exposed the "other's" history of oppression and denigration by imperialists, and their practice of othering, thereby challenging Eurocentric conceptions. In this context, it is important to define the concept of othering which Eurocentric discourse heavily relies on to maintain the divide between self and other. Lister (2004) explains othering as a 'process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between 'us' and 'them' – between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained' (p. 101). Other scholars see it as "the process whereby a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group" (Schwalbe et al. 2000, p. 422). In other words, the process of othering entails perceiving the marginalized only in terms of their "undesirable" difference in the sense that people who are othered are viewed as "morally and/ or intellectually inferior" (Schwalbe et al., 2000, p. 423). On the other hand, Sune Qvotrup Jensen (2011) defines othering as:

Discursive processes by which powerful groups, who may or may not make up a numerical majority, define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribe problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups. Such discursive processes affirm the legitimacy and superiority of the powerful and condition identity formation among the subordinate (p. 65)

It is clear how the practice of othering has been adopted by imperialists throughout history to justify and ensure the legitimacy of their attacks on the "inferior" other. To explore the way Eurocentric discourse functions within marginalized societies, improve student understanding of the practice of "othering," and build empathy, three short stories are examined: Albert Camus' "The Guest" (1957), Leila Aboulela's "The Museum" (2018), and Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic" (1997). These three literary texts were selected because in each one acts of othering and humanization are emphasized as they contribute to the dismantling of Eurocentric discourse.

In Camus' "The Guest," the Arab is treated as "other" and an inferior savage. As one of the colonized, he is dehumanized and disrespected by the French colonizer especially at the beginning of the story. Later on, Daru and the Arab are both humanized and this is demonstrated through the manner in which they interacted with each other. Daru is represented as the kind and hospitable host in spite of his status as colonizer, unlike a typical colonizer who murders and oppresses, and the Arab is also humanized since his rights are respected and he is dealt with as a guest. He is even protected by Daru. This humanization of both parties reflect hope in the ability to build a bridge of communication between the two and increase empathy toward the colonized. Daru's act of compassion toward the Arab is reflected in the food and money he gives him. Daru offers a package to the prisoner.

"Take it," he said. "There are dates, bread, sugar. You can hold out for two days. Here are a thousand francs too." ...

"Now look," the schoolmaster said as he pointed in the direction of the east, "there's the way to Tinguit. You have a two-hour walk. At Tinguit are the administration and the police. They are expecting you." ... Daru [then] took (the prisoner's] elbow and turned him rather roughly toward the south .... "There's the trail across the plateau. In a day's walk from here you'll find pasturelands and the first nomads. They'll take you in and shelter you according to their law" (Camus, 1957, p.10).

Daru's kindness to the Arab contributes to the humanization of the colonized. His actions unsettle the Eurocentric image of the Arab as savage, violent, and uncivilized especially that the Arab was very civil in the way he dealt with Daru although he stands as a symbol of French colonization. He recognizes the way Daru deviates from the typical role of colonizer and returns the favor by respecting him, not taking revenge for his people, and showing gratitude.

In "The Museum," othering takes place through the artifacts displayed that misrepresent Africa. Othering is visible when Africa's history is flattened and is represented as full of animals and jungles devoid of culture, development, and civilization. This practice of othering is juxtaposed against the humanization of the colonizer represented through Bryan. He presents the reader with a subversive role of a previous colonizer who shows kindness and wishes to change and build a relationship with its past colonial subject. He is humanized in the story to reflect potential for reconciliation between the colonizer and the colonized if they make an effort to understand the impact of their imperial and civilizing mission. At the same time, the reader acknowledges that such change is difficult given the colonizer's inability to comprehend the extent of the native's pain caused by his dominance over other nations. In addition, Shadia who represents the colonized is also humanized through her relationship with Bryan. He treats her as an equal who is worthy of respect and kindness. Furthermore, the way they perceive each other is not dictated by Eurocentric thought. In fact, their friendship undermines Eurocentric discourse and destabilizes the divisions ingrained within.

In "My Son the Fanatic," the son is othered by his father who represents Eurocentric thought. He rejects his son and mistreats him for practicing his faith. Parvez is overcome by Islamophobic rhetoric and an obsession with the West and its promises of success and prosperity for hardworking citizens. Through his friendship with Bettina, a white prostitute, he and his son are humanized. That is, she shows compassion toward Parvez, listens to his problems, and tries to help him connect with his son. Their friendship unsettles Eurocentric and Islamophobic discourse since Parvez and his family are not being viewed negatively due to their racial and religious background by Bettina who represents Eurocentric ideals. She takes him as a friend and does not submit to Eurocentric ideology that demonizes people such as himself. At the same time, his son is humanized in the story because he is the sound of resistance to Western dominance and oppression and he makes a sound argument against assimilation. To add, he does not show violence toward his angry father who physically attacks him while praying and violates his rights as a human being. Throughout the story, he tries to present his point of view as a Muslim and victim to Islamophobia only to help his father understand his stance on assimilation and persuade him to practice his faith.

4.2. Procedures:

To develop student ability to critique and question Eurocentric discourse and enhance their understanding and tolerance of "the other," the three literary texts were selected and certain procedures were followed as they were taught in the English class.

1. Students were asked to write down how they perceived Arabs or Muslims before reading any stories
2. Students were exposed to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism
3. Discussions took place on the way Eurocentric discourse uplifts the status of the Western world while it degrades "the other"
4. Students shared stories and incidents they had encountered in life or through media where Eurocentric views prevailed
5. They were given discussion questions to contemplate as they read the short stories
6. Students engaged in conversations about the discussion questions and carried out a critical analysis of the stories.

7. Students were required to watch one of the suggested films on their own
8. Students were asked to reflect on what they learned and provide some feedback

4.2.1. Student perceptions

Before students were exposed to Eurocentric discourse or Orientalism, they were asked to write down their perceptions of Arabs and Muslims. Examples of their comments are:

I think Muslim women are veiled and oppressed and have no freedom

Muslims want to kill westerners because they don't like them

Muslims and Arabs have no democracy but if they don't like the west, they should go back to their countries

We see them in the media as terrorists and violent people

Not all Muslims are terrorists, some are nice people.

I don't have to deal with them because they are very different from me.

I am glad I do not come from their countries where people don't have rights

4.2.2. Discussion Questions

The following questions were provided to guide the discussion about the texts. The aim behind them was for students to question Eurocentric ideologies and examine the biases within hegemonic discourses used in the stories. The questions raised were:

1. How are the two perspectives of I and "the other" portrayed in the story?

2. Describe the influence of Eurocentric discourse on characters' relationships in the story?

3. Explain ways to build respect and understanding between characters?

4. How can our understanding of the stories help in subverting Eurocentric discourse and bridging the gap between I and "the other" in the real world?

4.2.3 Analysis

-The three selected texts are powerful in their critique of Eurocentrism and its role in shaping perceptions of "the other." Camus' "The Guest" reveals the colonizer's struggle with colonial ideology. It depicts the French colonization of Algeria with a focus on an unexpected act of kindness committed by the colonizer toward the colonized. In the story, Daru, a French schoolteacher, is ordered to surrender an Arab to the authorities because he is accused of killing his cousin. The Arab is brought to Daru to be taken to the police headquarters, and because it is wartime, he is expected to comply with the orders. Nevertheless, Daru deals with the Arab in a manner different from the way the soldier treats him. The soldier brings the Arab tied up because in his eyes, he is a criminal. u. When they reach Daru, he tells the soldier to untie the Arab and does it himself. Daru offers the Arab food and lets him eat first as a guest would be treated. He also offers him a place to sleep like a free man without the shackles. He even sleeps in the same room with him. This shows that he trusts the Arab and does not feel threatened by him, which undermines the Western image of the savage and violent "other." The following day, Daru takes the prisoner to an area, gives him food and money, and directs him to one way that leads to the police headquarters and another where he can escape and find shelter and protection. He turns around to return to his schoolhouse and leaves the prisoner to decide which way to go. After some distance, Daru looks back and sees the Arab taking the path to the police headquarters. Thus, Camus represents the Arab as moral and respectful of the host, who also makes a moral choice to hand himself in, although he has the freedom to escape any punishment.Moreover, **t**he story's title, "The Guest," indicates how Daru perceives the Arabs, as he is treated with great hospitality. The Eurocentric vision of I and "the other" is diminished through Daru's refusal to surrender the Arab to the authorities. Daru's conduct reveals to the reader that he "acknowledges the prisoner's status as a complex moral being" (Roberts, 2008, p. 538). Daru has high values and ethics and does not want to be the one to decide a man's destiny especially since he could be innocent. Roberts (2008) explains that "Daru does not simply position the prisoner as an unknowable, unknowing 'Other' and denude him of his humanity,"

yet "He puts himself at tremendous risk with his actions" (p.538).

This story offers several perspectives to consider such as the binary opposition of the self vs. "the other" where Daru and Balducci are given names and statuses, whereas, the prisoner is called "the Arab" deprived of any status or identity. Nevertheless, Daru's acts of kindness function as an objection to such a binary. His decision to be humane with the prisoner reflects a resistance to the binary of superior/ inferior set by Eurocentric thought in dealing with the colonized. Camus creates a paradigm shift through representing Daru's conflicted position as colonizer who refuses to play the role. This teaches students that attitudes toward the colonial process are not fixed but constantly shifting and developing, and thereby humanizing the colonizer himself/ herself. The reader is given a glimpse of Daru's world and skepticism about advancing the colonial vision:

When he got up, no noise came from the classroom. He was amazed at the unmixed joy he derived from the mere thought that the Arab might have fled and that he would be alone with no decision to make. But the prisoner was there. He had merely stretched out between the stove and the desk. (Camus, 1957, p. 6)

The narrator's comment proves that the story humanizes both the colonizer and the colonized through its characters who do not conform to the typical image of colonizer vs. the colonized. This humanization destabilizes the divide between East and West on which Eurocentric discourse capitalizes.

It is ironic that Daru hosts the Arab and treats him as a guest when in reality it is Daru, the foreigner, who is a guest on the Arab's land. Camus uses the term "guest" which implies a temporary stay for the visitor which does not apply to the Arab since he is the owner of the land. However, Daru cannot be seen as a guest either because he is not welcome there since he is the colonizer. Rob Roy McGregor (1997) states that "Commentators on "The Guest" frequently mention the meaning of the ambiguous title, pointing out that it may be translated as "the guest" or "the host" and may refer either to Daru or the Arab" (p. 318). At one point, Daru tells Balducci that he refuses to hand in the prisoner to which he replies: "You're crazy, son. If there's an uprising, no one is safe, we're all in the same boat" and Daru's response is "I'll defend myself. I'll have time to see them coming" (Camus, 1957, p.5). Balducci tries to remind him that he is part of the empire as well and that if the war starts with the Arabs, there will be no difference between the two, whether he were in the army or a teacher since they both represents the empire. Balducci considers Daru's refusal an act of defiance to the empire's mission. He does not see it as an individual choice but a direct form of disobedience to do his job as a representative of French colonialism. He tells Daru: "If you want to drop us, go ahead. I'll not denounce you. I have an order to deliver the prisoner and I'm doing so. And now you'll just sign this paper for me" (Camus, 1957, p.5). The "us" here emphasizes the Eurocentric binary of "us" and "them" which Daru is expected to commit to but actually rejects. According to Daniel Muhlestein (1999), by freeing the prisoner, Daru "subverts empire's most powerful ideological tool by acknowledging the Arab's subjectivity. And he undermines the repressive power of the colonial state by releasing the prisoner from physical bondage" (p.230).

Another text used to deepen student understanding of inequalities in the world is Leila Aboulela's "The Museum" (2018). The story represents the impact of Eurocentric discourse on Western perceptions of the Middle East within the postcolonial period. It functions as a "counter- narrative which unsettles Eurocentric thought and its power over knowledge" (Qutami, 2022, p.226). "The Museum" is an award-winning story that deals with museums as cultural institutions through which Eurocentric ideals are continuously reproduced. Its protagonist, Shadia, is faced with demeaning images of Africa as a jungle filled with animals and people in need of civilization and a White colleague, Bryan, who is kind and helpful but views the soldiers in the museum poster as heroes who brought about change in Africa. He cannot relate to the experience of the colonized and lacks critical thinking to question imperial acts and decisions. Aboulela's story emphasizes that communication and friendship between the colonizer and colonized is possible but, unfortunately, Shadia's and Bryan's attempt to get past the colonial history and divisions created by Eurocentric discourse, fails when they visit the museum and she realizes that "the imperialists who had humiliated her history were heroes in his eyes" (Abuolela, 2018, p. 17). Aboulela makes Eurocentric discourse responsible for turning the imperialist into a hero in the eyes of the public at the expense of the colonized who are portrayed as simple and backward people in need of civilization. It is these perceptions that stand in the way and prevent Shadia and Bryan from developing an understanding of each other's history and culture

and thereby reduces chances for empathy toward "the other." She tells Bryan: "They are telling lies in the museum." "Don't believe them. It's all wrong. It's not jungles and antelopes, it's people. We have things like computers and cars" (Aboulela, 2018, p. 18). Aboulela reflects the disparity between the Africa represented through the museum exhibit and Shadia's life in Sudan where people have fancy weddings, cars, computers, and a degree in medicine such as her father. Shadia, herself, being an educated young woman who is completing her studies in a Western country also subverts the image of Arab women as ignorant and oppressed. The artifacts at the museum are used to disseminate the colonial narrative while the colonized has lost his voice and agency. That is, Scotland is portrayed as having "made a disproportionate impact on the world at large by contributing so many skilled and committed individuals" (Aboulela, 2018, p.15). The "real" Africa, on the other hand, is portrayed as a jungle filled with animals and adventure.

The story invites students to consider the suppressed narrative of the British Empire's colonial legacy that is being glorified as a victory to be celebrated. It shows the impact of Eurocentrism on the way people perceive historical events that can be misconstrued to deliver a message that serves the empire; in this case, it is a celebration of power and oppression rather than the colonization and looting of Africa and its resources. This is regarded a violation of human rights and a form of violence against the oppressed (Al Ghammaz et al., 2022; Alkayid et al., 2021). The story reveals various historical facts about the colonizers, the colonized, and their descendants. It also calls for students' reflection on how particular meanings are attached and determined by "institutional practices and power relations" (Abdeen & Abd-Rabbo, 2018). In the story, the museum's role in shaping public opinion and producing knowledge about other cultures must be re-evaluated. Analyzing the discourse through which the colonized nation is represented teaches students to read between the lines to recognize the underlying biases that influence people's behavior and judgement. One significant quote in the story is in a letter written by a diplomat on his positive experience in Ethiopia: *"this was the first time since we have started that we have really been in Africa- the real Africa of jungle inhabited only by game, and plains where herds of antelope meet your eye in every direction"* (Aboulela, 2018, p.181). Shedding light on how Africans may feel having read the letter makes the colonial experience different from the White colonizer's who would find it adventurous and appealing. Students understand that by portraying Africa as such, an entire culture and history are overlooked and an image of Africa as an epitome of savagery is what is documented and immortalized through museum displays. This representation of Africa allows students to imagine the physical and psychological damage colonization and Eurocentrism have caused. Shadia, finally, realizes that Bryan just does not understand the pain caused by the colonial process and unsettling his perceptions meant challenging the work of an entire empire. She thinks "If she had been strong, she would have explained, and not tired of explaining. She would have patiently taught him another language … if she had not been small in the museum" (Abuolela, 2018, p. 19). She gives up hope in the end because she feels dismantling the Eurocentric discourse is almost an impossible mission and would take centuries of resistance. This postcolonial narrative illustrates that images and meanings are determined by those in power and without that sense of authority, discourses of oppression are hard to subvert, yet resisting the erasure of histories remains a challenge "the other" must take on. "The Museum" introduces two opposing views and through them, readers are allowed into both worlds, the colonizer's and "the other's." Such an experience helps them identify with others' struggles and accept various perspectives.

In the western narrative, Arabs and Muslims are portrayed as "terrorists," "exotic," ignorant, belly dancers, and billionaires among other things (Shaheen, 2001). The west has created this image and continues to reproduce it through Eurocentric discourse that is circulated via the media, culture, education and all aspects of life because they have the power to control the narrative. In Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic" (1997), Parvez is influenced by Eurocentric discourse that encourages Islamophobia, denounces Islam, and regards it a violent religion that supports terrorism and extremism. Parvez is a Pakistani living in Britain who has given up on his Islamic faith in favor of Western culture while his son decides to embrace Islam. ~~The father, Parvez~~, He thinks his son, Ali, has joined a terrorist group and is angry about his decision to let go of his music and girlfriend, and pray five times a day. He is afraid his son, whose career as an accountant was going to be a great success, quit his major in order to become religious and follow Islam rather than embrace British culture and the dream the family held on to for so long. The son becomes critical of his father, who drinks alcohol, befriends a prostitute,

does not practice Islam, and seeks the approval of the British, who were their colonizers in the past. Parvez feels his son is ungrateful to him because he immigrated to Britain to provide the family with a better life and future and believes the country has much to offer. However, he needs to assimilate into Western culture and embrace it. In his eyes, Ali does not appreciate the sacrifices his father has made for the family to make it in a Western country as such. These conflicts over choosing a style of life and identity can be understood through Alshammari's (2018) interpretation and analysis of the story: "The text exposes issues that generate from the pressure of assimilation and the inability to view things from multiple perspectives. These issues include the intercultural struggle that occurs within the immigrant, the need to belong to a certain division of society, imposing questions of race, self-identity, and the dangers of "essentialising" one's identity" (p.57). Parvez' need to belong to British society is clearly not a priority for Ali who wishes to hold on to his Muslim identity regardless of the secularization that surrounds him. Although Parvez is Muslim himself, he rejects the faith and does not want his son to have any connection to it because what matters to him is fitting into Western society and enjoying the western style of life. Parvez' love for freedom is illustrated through his friendship with Bettina, the prostitute, drinking alcohol, and eating pork. While the clash intensifies between father and son, Ali cannot overlook his father's non- Islamic behavior and we are told: "Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her, 'You're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in!' (Kureishi, 1997, p. 125)

For Parvez, civilization, modernization, and assimilation mean leaving his culture behind and adopting western habits. He believes by eating pork, he will fit in better. Ironically, he associates the village with everything backward and pork with westernization and being accepted by British society. He is unaware that he has been brainwashed by the colonial and Eurocentric discourse that turned people like him against their own cultural origins and their faith. His negative view of Islam is reflected in his response to his son's decision to practice the faith and pray five times a day. He tells Bettina, "I'm going to tell him to pick up his prayer mat and get out of my house" (p. 127). This reaction represents a hostility to and rejection of Islam which is also a sign of Parvez' internalization of Eurocentric discourse. Ali, on the other hand, is aware of Eurocentric thought by which he is characterized as the "inferior other" and he resists such an ideology that regards some people more valuable and civilized than others based on their race or religious affiliations. The narrator states: "On one occasion Ali accused Parvez of 'grovelling' to the whites; in contrast, he explained, he was not 'inferior'; there was more to the world than the West, though the West always thought it was best" (Kureishi, 1997, p.128). Ali's views represent the voice of resistance that refuses to be silenced and wishes to recreate the narrative that challenges imperialist ideologies.

In the end, Parvez is furious about his son praying and following Islam and, finally, pushes and kicks him during his prayers. Ali hardly reacts to such violence and disrespect except with the comment: "So who's the fanatic now?" (Kureishi, 1997, p. 131). The story reflects how the image of Muslims as terrorists has been reproduced so often since 9/11 that merely practicing the religion raises suspicion leading to further marginalization, othering, and social inequality. It also shows that the father has internalized Eurocentric discourse through which he looks down on those following the Islamic faith and perceives them as a threat to the West. Parvez' views coincide with the British representation of Islam as being outside history and incompatible with western democracy and civilization (Grosfoguel, 2010).

The conversation between Parvez and Ali is telling as they represent two opposing views. As Alshammari (2018) points out, Ali cannot see his father's immigrant experience from more than one perspective (p. 57). Parvez, on the other hand, rejects Ali's views and makes no effort to understand or respect his choice. The story is an excellent example of the polarization that prevents tolerance and acceptance of "the other." The clash is partially caused by "the view of place" which is the way of seeing England as homely or an unwelcoming environment (Borbor, 2015, p. 124).

Ali: "The problem is this … You are too implicated in Western civilization"

Parvez: "Implicated! ... But we live here!"

Ali: "The Western materialists hate us … Papa, how can you love something which hates you?" (Kureishi, 1997, p. 125)

The dialogue shows Ali's assumptions of the West based on his knowledge of the Brits' colonial history and Eurocentric discourse. It reflects the way this discourse built barriers between cultures and people, encouraged hate and prejudice, and

created an identity crisis for millions. In addition to these stories representing multicultural literature, students' critical thinking skills and awareness of social inequalities can be enhanced through media sources and films such as Edward Said's documentary on Orientalism (E. Said, 1998). It has emphasized the way Disney movies shaped our opinions of "the other" and perpetuated racist attitudes. In this documentary, Said detects traces of Eurocentric discourse through inequalities and stereotypes within cartoon depictions of minorities which children grow up watching. He, actually, alerts the audience to the dangers of the prejudices they imply and become part of the children's "accepted knowledge."

5. Engaging with Counter- Hegemonic Narratives through Film

Films can also educate students about Eurocentrism, counter-hegemonic narratives, and Islamophobic discourse. Cliffort Cobb (2021), who shares Christensen's (2017) concerns, argues that while the public considers films as entertainment, we fail to see how everything we view impacts our lives and views of the world. Films can raise awareness and educate others about racism and discrimination which continue to affect society (p. 839). Many films deal with social problems and expose the viewers to various ways of living and thinking, but they may also misrepresent other cultures. The misrepresentations can be useful tools in examining social inequalities.

Films like *Something New* can be utilized as a teaching resource to educate students about justice and equality, and reinforce their learning of multicultural literature. It is a film about relationships between Whites and African- Americans in the USA and how they are affected by a history of racism. The film breaks the barriers between the two races by presenting an open-minded couple who can engage in a healthy conversation about racism and White supremacy. The heroine struggles at the workplace because White males underestimate her qualifications and judge her based on her skin color. Her White boyfriend tries to understand her perspective and shows empathy bringing them closer to each other. The film exposes viewers to the conflicts between the two races and their perceptions of each other which helps them better understand their history and their present. Bell (2010) reports that discussions of this movie in his class revealed that his White students sometimes felt inhibited around Blacks "because of their oversensitivity about race" (p. 276). They expressed the difficulties they face in identifying Blacks as such because they did not want to offend anyone and yet did not know what was politically correct in this context (Bell, 2010). These conversations can be fruitful whereby different perspectives are discussed bringing new ways of thought and seeing to the center, and thus a sense of empathy is developed.

Another film that can be utilized in the classroom is *The Blind Side* which is based on a true story. It is about a white family in Memphis who takes in a homeless black boy and takes care of him and his education as one of their children until he gets to college and eventually becomes an NFL player (Franzen, 2009). This film emphasizes the positive relationships that can grow between Whites and African- Americans regardless of skin color and demonstrates empathy toward the Other. That is, the family identified with the boy and took action to improve his life beyond racial barriers making tolerance and acceptance possible within a predominantly White society. Presenting Whites as sympathetic figures is also vital in avoiding the homogenization of all Whites and generalization about an entire race due to a colonial past or history of slavery. This film humanizes Whites and African- Americans rather than treating them like monsters who threaten one another. This representation of both races contributes to the rewriting of their own narrative in resistance to Eurocentric discourse that capitalizes on the division of society into "us" and "them" and the binary of civilized/ uncivilized. This film may open up discussions about Americans being portrayed as the "White savior" and Blacks as those in need of saving. These discussions can be enriching as students explore the various perspectives that exist so that a single one is not to be held above others as prescribed by Eurocentric discourse.

Furthermore, *Crash* is a 2004 film that reveals social and racial tensions in Los Angeles, how people from different racial, social, and religious backgrounds feel about each other, and the consequences of such feelings. It shows the stories of whites, blacks, Iranians, Koreans, Latinos, the rich and poor, and how they resent others since they are presumed "different." The film focuses on the characters' prejudices and how they all become victims but are also guilty of them simultaneously (Ebert, 2005). This film can lead to discussions about discrimination against other cultural groups resulting from false notions developed through the media and Eurocentric discourse. Students can express their opinions of how each

character felt having experienced discrimination. This can help them empathize with others' suffering and experience reality from the perspective of victims who are being punished due to identity. More frequent encounters with such scenarios and engagement in similar discussions improve students' sensitivity to others and their ability to analyze and reflect on why certain cultural groups are demonized while others are celebrated, and how these disparities came about.

These difficult conversations about race, power relations, and inequalities can be facilitated through role play which can be a valuable tool when tackling such serious issues. It allows students to "place themselves in a vulnerable social position" without putting themselves at risk and vicariously, "explore areas of experience that are not available to them in their real lives." Role play exposes them to lifestyles different from their own, which they can discuss, analyze, and evaluate for themselves and discover their own biases bringing about awareness and change (Fischer & Laan, 2002). In using role play, all students must get involved in the activity, so minority students do not get singled out. Students should be given this activity after learning about Eurocentric discourse and reading several multicultural literary texts because this improves their knowledge of the cultural group they present in the role play. For instance, they can play a sketch of a Latino applying for a job and dealing with underestimation due to his/ her racial background and then discuss how this can be handled in real life. Another situation is when a girl wearing a headscarf is bullied by other students at school due to Islamophobia.

Another example is when a student's allowance is stolen in class, and a poor student from the minority is immediately accused without any evidence to prove it. Or when a White individual treats an other" kindly and respectfully at the time when the latter expects to hear a racist remark. This activity should be followed by a discussion of how they felt playing the roles of the privileged or the underprivileged. Once they recognize "the other's" struggle, they start to sympathize with each other, and repeating similar conversations helps to build a bridge of communication between them. These role-playing scenarios and dialogues force students out of their comfort zone to think of alternative perspectives, and re-evaluate their reactions and feelings about such situations, thereby increasing their empathy for others. This experience, through a Freirean lens, can be transformative. Students think critically of the status quo and normalized oppression and led by a desire to create change, as active agents, they start to engage in the problem-solving process and attempt to address the social ills within their communities. When they realize they can make a difference in the world, they feel empowered and are transformed by what they learned.

6. Student feedback

Students were asked to give feedback on how they felt about the stories and their reactions to what they have learned. The following are samples of the comments received:

I used to think we should be careful around Muslims because of terrorism but I can see from the stories that many are victims not terrorists.

I thought the East and the West were always enemies but the stories show we can be kind to each other, but it is politics that ruins everything.

I think writers were trying to show their people's views which is fine but that does not mean I have to like Arabs.

I did not know that our museums were disrespectful of Arabs and that we spread misinformation about them, we should fix this problem.

I think more communication with Arabs and Muslims can help us understand them and know more about their lives.

I feared Arabs before but realize that they are afraid of us too and that we would erase their cultures and that is a legitimate fear. I would worry too if my country was colonized.

I guess I realized that the media has been feeding us lies and giving us one side of the story.

I don't care much for religious beliefs but everyone is entitled to have their own.

I never met an Arab or Muslim but they don't seem evil in the stories. They are people just like us with families and children.

The stories are an eye opener. Now I feel sorry for them because it's not their fault they were born Arab or that they were colonized.

Student feedback has been crucial to the researchers to understand how students react to difficult subjects that relate to inequality and intolerance. Their responses were necessary to determine if the goal to help them gain perspective and increase empathy through exposing them to various viewpoints has been achieved.

7. Conclusion

The world has become so diverse that educators and learners cannot ignore multiculturalism in the 21st century. It is crucial that learners are exposed to different ethnicities and global issues to equip them with the necessary tools to adapt to a constantly changing world. Functioning successfully in a diverse environment and being challenged by opposing views is important for personal growth and social development. Glassman (2001) points out:

If humans do not see themselves in the context of social views different from themselves, they are unable to reconstruct themselves in the face of a problematic society. Unable to change themselves, and, therefore, unable to change the world, humans can become slaves to their history and their habits. (p.6)

Understanding "the other's" culture and their various styles of thinking turn individuals into life-long learners with improved problem-solving skills and a sense of empathy crucial to the advancement of multicultural societies. Learning about Eurocentric discourse and its biases through applying critical pedagogy also produces responsible citizens who do not accept the false divide created between people but strive for social change and justice.

The study focused on utilizing multicultural literature in teaching students to critique inequalities and biases created by Eurocentric discourse and to question the discourse. The other goal in mind was to show how reading literature can enhance students' sense of empathy and tolerance of "the other." That is, by exposing them to multiple perspectives and struggles, they are better able to identify with people in the real world which was reflected in student feedback. Their responses and reactions to the literary texts indicated that they have started to question preconceived notions of "the other," the media, and Eurocentric thought, and consider others' perspectives. They recognized that there were other ways of seeing the world and that by opening up to new cultures and nations, they gained an improved understanding of the world at large. Previous literature supports these positive outcomes. For instance, UNESCO (2011) emphasized the importance of teaching about various cultures and belief systems to reduce discrimination and intolerance. Vezzali et al. (2012) also demonstrates the way reading fiction can be utilized to increase empathy and reduce hostility and prejudice against other races. Vezzali et al. (2012) asserts that when students read stories in which heroes coming from different cultural backgrounds face similar challenges and share the same concerns, they are able to identify with them and become more sympathetic to their suffering. To add, another positive outcome was that students expressed a genuine concern for people whose experiences resemble those of the characters in the stories. This was followed by discussions about ways to address "othering" and discrimination in everyday life as students wanted to contribute to social reform. This shows that reading multicultural literature inspired a desire to make a difference in the world. A similar result was articulated by Vezzali et al. (2021) who examined student reactions to stories that address social disparities and found that they inspire a willingness to engage in social activism. These outcomes reveal that students need more exposure to readings that relate to other cultures to improve their ability to detect inequalities in the world and understand other perspectives and thereby lead to more tolerance and empathy..

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