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But We Don't Have Any Students Like That Here: Incorporating International Children's

Literature in a Middle School Language Arts Class

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Abstract

This qualitative, descriptive study explored the influence multi-cultural and international children's literature had on the lives of 18 middle school students in a rural Midwestern school. The students were in an 8th grade Language Arts class. As part of a classroom unit, the students read *The Upstairs Room* by Johanna Reiss and *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Goodrich & Hackett. The teacher held discussions and created student activities focusing on student exploration of their attitudes about human rights, prejudice, and responsibility to others while learning literary elements such as characterization and point of view. Data were collected through audio recordings, journal and essay responses, and field notes. All 18 students reported a change in attitude as a result of the unit of study. Sixteen of the eighteen students stated new feelings including compassion and empathy for others and their situations as a result of reading the two books. Students also became cognizant of other people's difficulties. Findings suggest reading multicultural and international children's literature can impact the lives of students.

Keywords: multi-cultural and international children's literature, , 8th grade Language Arts, rural Midwestern school, characterization and point of view.

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Background of the Problem

"But we don't have any students like that here." This response came from the public
school's librarian after she was presented with a list of titles and asked to purchase the multi-
cultural and international children's texts. "That's exactly why **we need** these books," was the
teacher's response. All children should have rich opportunities to experience diverse books
because enthralling stories allow readers to imagine the lives of others. Children are molded by
their life experiences. These experiences include the books they read (Hadaway & McKenna,
2007).

The research objective of this study was to show the difference (if any) multi-cultural and
international children's literature can make in students' lives. The objectives for teaching a unit
featuring *The Upstairs Room* by Johanna Reiss and *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Goodrich &
Hackett were to have students examine their attitudes about human rights, prejudice, and
responsibility to others while at the same time learning literary elements such as characterization
and point of view.

Perspective

This study was conducted from the standpoint of interpretivist research. Interpretivist
research is a reconstruction of the perspectives held by the participants. It attempts to look at the
data to uncover meaning and understand the deeper implications of people's actions in a
qualitative manner. Interpretivist research designs are emergent and flexible, allowing for the
construction of knowledge and changes in data collection and perspectives during the study
(Erickson, 1986). The interpretivist researcher relies upon the participants' views of the situation
being studied.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist grounded theory is a methodology seeking to construct theory about issues
of importance in people's lives (Glaser, 1978). It is a general methodology for developing
theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory develops and
evolves during the research process due to the interplay between the data collection and analysis
phases. This inductive research approach focuses on social interactions with theory being built
from the data gathered during interviews and other observations.

Literature Review
Multicultural and International Children's Literature

All children should have rich opportunities involving terrific books because enthralling
stories allows readers to imagine the lives of others. They should experience becoming
engrossed in the magic of a wonderful story. Children's literature breaks down barriers.
Typically, children do not care where their stories originate from, or who the stories are about.
Children need books where they can see themselves and also the world in which they live
(Lehman, 2007; Rochman, 1993). Books can bring the world closer to children by exposing
them to a variety of perspectives and cultures (Zeece & Hayes, 2004).

Children are molded by their life experiences. These experiences include the books that
they read (Hadaway & McKenna, 2007). Many children are culturally isolated. Reading

multicultural and international books allows children to discover a world beyond their own family and the community in which they live. Reading multicultural and international literature is a great start for children to become lifelong readers. These books help children gain awareness of the world around them. Literature can provide children with cultural experiences, extending and enriching their lives (Rochman, 1993). Such experiences can help children learn about social justice and diversity issues (Freeman, Lehman, & Scharer, 2007).

  Multicultural Children's Literature. The voices of many cultures can be heard when children read multicultural books. "Good literature creates empathy in readers, who, between the pages of books, enter the lives of others like and unlike themselves" (Lehman, 2007, p. 68). According to Hadaway and McKenna (2007) multicultural literature refers to books published in the United States that portray diverse American cultures.

  According to Yokota (1993), multicultural literature represents any distinct cultural group through accurate portrayal and rich detail. This definition includes other diverse cultural groups such as the Jewish, Appalachians, women, handicapped people, and people with varying sexual preferences. These groups have often been overlooked in literature and in school curriculum.

  Multicultural literature can be described as literature that portrays racial or ethnic groups aside from the white Anglo-Saxon majority that currently reside in the United States (Henderson & May, 2005). Multicultural books include those written about ethnic groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, Korean Americans, Latino/Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans.

  Professor Emeritus at the Ohio State University, Rudine Sims Bishop (1997), defines multicultural literature as works "that reflect racial, ethnic, and social diversity that is characteristic of our pluralistic society and of the world" (p. 3). Furthermore, Sims Bishop (1992) states that it refers to "literature by and about people who are members of groups considered to be outside of the socio-political mainstream of the United States" (p. 39).

  Mingshui Cai (1998) explains the goal is not solely to help people understand, accept and appreciate cultural differences, but also to "transform the existing social order to ensure greater voice and authority to marginalized cultures and to achieve social equality and justice between all cultures so that people of different cultural backgrounds can live peacefully in a truly democratic world" (p. 271).

  A problem with defining cultural groups, however, is that cultures can be locked into clusters with labels. Differences within cultures can be substantial. For example, Cambodia and Pakistan are both Asian countries; however, their cultures are very different. Likewise, the culture of Hispanic migrant workers is very different from that of urban dwelling Hispanics. Multicultural and international children's literature can help dispel these misconceptions.

International Children's Literature. International children's literature includes all types of texts: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, folktales, myths, legends and other genres. The first international stories were traditional tales, originating long ago, following people as they migrated (Tomlinson, 1998). Many consider the translated books of *Babar*, *Bambi*, *Pinocchio*, *Pippi Longstocking,* and *Winnie the Pooh* to be classics of children's literature in the United States; however, they are actually international books. American versions of the literature created in other countries often vary greatly from the original sources (Stan, 2002; Tomlinson, 1998).

While there are differing definitions for international children's literature (Hadaway & McKenna, 2007) it is not the same as multicultural literature. Some believe the definition of international children's literature to be books originally published in other countries and then brought to the United States.

Tomlinson (1998) defines international children's literature, for those who live in the United States, as "a body of books originally published for children in a country other than the United States in a language of that country and later published in this country" (p. 4). Still others, such as Freeman and Lehman (2001), define it as including "books written and published first in countries other than the United States, books written by immigrants to the United States about their home countries, books written by others from other countries, and books written by American authors and published in the United States with settings in other countries" (p. 10). Freeman and Lehman's definition includes books written by authors who are not true cultural insiders. The author of this paper endorses this broader definition.

The Relationship between Multicultural and International Children's Literature. While multicultural and international children's literature are not synonymous, there are similarities. Both help children understand the world. Both include all types of texts and both focus on a variety of people and cultures. Typically, multicultural literature represents ethnic or racial groups within the United States. International books can be about the same classification of ethnic or racial groups, but the text is written by authors from other countries, immigrants, or with settings taking place in countries other than the United States.

Both types of literature can be used to build multicultural and international understanding of the world in which the readers live (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Ladd, 1993; Stan, 2002). The more one knows about other people, the less likely they are to view them as strangers. Both types of children's books can be used to support and to deepen a student's understanding of a particular topic or issue (Rochman, 1993) and to eliminate gaps between cultures and people (Tomlinson, 1998). Reading these two types of literature helps children to be swept into worlds that are most likely entirely new to them. Readers should cast aside their expectations and endure the "foreignness" until it ceases to feel foreign (Henderson & May, 2005). Then they may have slipped into a new world for the rest of their lives! With experiences like this, they are likely to enrich their lives, inform the world of peace, and become better citizens. Utilizing a variety of multicultural and international literature, combined with rich discourse, can deepen understanding as students learn more about cultural differences and similarities.

Reading international and multicultural titles help children gain a better understanding of cultural differences. For example, many American children may not view *Little Red Riding*

Hood as an international book because they have adapted it into their culture. *Anansi*, on the other hand, is a book many children may not have heard of. Is this because *Little Red Riding Hood* is a story about a White girl living in a "normal" home and going to visit grandma whereas *Anansi*, being from Africa, is less adaptable to one's idea of "normal"? Some multicultural and international literature is more adaptable to the mainstream culture than others. As more of these forms of literature are introduced in the classrooms, the definition of "normal" will broaden.

Conclusion

Multicultural and international children's literature teaches students important concepts and issues. It is vital in today's world because we work together with people who come from all walks of life and backgrounds. Books can be utilized as learning experiences to explore social justice and diversity issues. When children realize the similarities that are shared with others, they acquire a sense of acceptance and appreciation. This can lead to a better understanding and, ultimately, world peace. Rudine Sims Bishop believes children need to read this literature which not only allows them to see through the window to the world around them, but also to see themselves mirrored in the texts with which they come into contact.

Research Question

The following research question served as the focal point of this study. It was generated from prior researchers' work combined with the author's personal observations and experiences as a classroom teacher of middle school students.

- What difference (if any) can multi-cultural and international children's literature make in students' lives?

Methods

Participants

This case study took place in January of 2009 during a month long unit of study with an 8th grade class. The Language Arts class consisted of 18 members (17 white, 1 Chinese American) in a rural Midwestern K-12 public school with a free/reduced lunch population of 22%. The class met each school day for 50 minutes. The students ranged in age from 13-15. Throughout this study, pseudonyms are used to protect the students.

Table 1 *Demographics of Study Participants* *As of January 1, 2009		
Demographics	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male (8 students)	44%
	Female (10 students)	56%
Age*	13 (10 students)	55%
	14 (7 students)	39%
	15 (1 students)	6%
Ethnicity	Chinese American (1 student)	6%
	Caucasian (17 students)	94%

Data Sources

Data collection occurred while teaching the unit and included the following data sources: student journal and essay responses, observation field notes, and audio-digital recordings of class discussions. This data was designed to document, narrate, and interpret the attitudes about human rights, prejudice, and responsibility to others displayed by the 18 students participating in the study.

Qualitative methods offer a potentially powerful means of uncovering the complex experiences of participants in research studies. Rather than focus on measuring behavior or attitudes, a qualitative approach focuses on the interpretations of the participants.

Procedures

To begin the unit, the students worked together in groups of four to complete a KWL chart regarding the Holocaust. A whole class discussion was held next regarding their charts and their thoughts regarding the issues. Finally, the students were told to imagine this scenario: "The government issued a statement saying you and your family, because of your religious faith, will be deported to another country to help rebuild their war damage and that they promise it will only be temporary and then you will be allowed to return home after the war. Additionally, the government issued a warning that anyone caught attempting to escape or hide will be put to death." Students silently lined up on the side of the classroom that contained what they would do: escape or hide, or not attempt either for fear of being punished. A debate then ensued regarding the students' choices. Some students changed sides of the classroom after hearing their peers' opinions.

Next, both books (*The Upstairs Room* by Johanna Reiss and *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Goodrich & Hackett) were distributed only to the students who lined up on the "hide" side of the classroom, as the teacher explained that they are like the main characters in our books because they went into hiding. After the book talk the teacher gave in which she introduced each book to

the students and included some of the information the groups included on their KWL charts, the students who were on the "escape" side of the classroom received both of their books.

Throughout the four week long unit, the teacher held daily discussions with the students over their reading assignments. She also kept daily notes of her observations. Approximately three times each week, the students responded in their journals to short prompts which included items such as:

◨ Write a paragraph about the conditions under which the Franks and the Van Daans must live. Include a second paragraph telling how you would feel living under such conditions.

◨ What five items from home would you miss the most if you had to leave them and why?

◨ Write a solid paragraph in which you tell what things you think cannot be taken from a person's mind or spirit. Be certain to connect Anne Frank and "Annie" from *The Upstairs Room* and/or their experiences into your writing.

◨ Share your thoughts and feelings about the relationship you have with your parent or guardian and compare/contrast this with Anne.

◨ What effect has living in hiding had on the people in both books? Put yourself in this situation. How would you be coping?

◨ People like Miep and Mr. Kraler were at work rescuing and protecting Jews in every country affected by the Holocaust. Why do you think they do this? Could you make these kinds of sacrifices and take these risks?

◨ Have you ever had a similarly awkward experience, like Annie and Anne, when you were trying to make friends? Maybe at camp, with distant relatives, or new neighbors or classmates? Tell about it and connect your writing to Annie and Anne's lives.

Over the course of the unit, the students also wrote three formal essays based on the following questions:

◨ Explain how the main characters (Annie & Anne) felt about prejudice. Include their attitudes about different events that happened to them and also how you would feel if you were in their shoes.

◨ The families in both texts received help from others. Explain how the story would have been different without this intervention and also if you would have been willing to put your own life at risk to help them.

◨ Discuss how your initial feeling regarding human rights, prejudice, and responsibility to others changed as a result of reading these two books and also our class discussions and activities. If they did not change, explain why you feel they did not.

Research

The constant comparative method is commonly used for data analysis in qualitative research studies (Merriam, 1998). It involves comparing one segment of data with another segment of data to establish similarities and differences. Data are grouped together according to similar aspects. These aspects are given a label which then makes a category. According to Merriam (1998), the overall object of analysis is to seek patterns in the data.

This study was conducted with the constant comparative method during the data collection process. Notes were made regarding emerging categories and data was constantly compared within the same set and from previous data as the researcher continually searched for conceptual links. This helped to determine the study's themes.

Each of the data sets was marked and notes were made to determine impressions and emerging trends. During the reading and re-reading of each data set, the research question was revisited to narrow the data collection. The data was then coded and categorized to encompass the major themes of the research study.

These comparisons led to tentative categories that were then compared to each other and to other instances. Once the researcher identified a theme, she searched through the data sets for other related comments, employing a constant comparison to further develop the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This means that initially unrelated themes were occasionally grounded together as interconnections became apparent.

Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). This process of data analysis is intuitive and flexible. It has the ability to reinterpret and change over the course of the analysis, leading to new ways of understanding as new ideas are put together and participants' interpretations are seen in a fresh light.

Results

Important findings evolved as the students took part in the readings, writings, and discussions regarding the two texts studies during the four week unit. This allowed the researcher to learn more about the influence of the literature and the related discussions upon the students' lives. Data were scrutinized and assigned codes. During exploration themes of prejudice, and responsibility to others emerged. These themes include compassion, empathy, and a greater awareness of others and their situations. The themes support previous research. Awareness, tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity can all be explored through children's literature (Hadaway & McKenna, 2007; Lehman, 2007; & Rochman, 1993).

Comparing and contrasting the two main characters in the two texts, allowed the students to understand that people are all the same, yet different and that we may have different coping mechanisms. Many students commented on how brave the characters under study were and that they were inspiring. Emily wrote, "Anne and Annie both talked about their future which tells us they had hope. They also were able to see the best in every situation. I don't know if I could be that strong and brave." Wanqui wrote, "Both main characters have positive attitudes throughout

the texts. They try to make the best out of their situation, even though they are living in terrible conditions. I've had challenges in my life and it's like Anne and Annie let me know that even though my case wasn't as bad as theirs, I should try to be positive and think of the future too." Darin wrote, "Although they were young, they made a difference in our world. Anne Frank died, but she is still an author and also a teacher sharing her life experience with us. Annie lived and went on to write a book of her experiences. Without these books, we would not have known how kids our age were affected by actions of others." The classroom teacher wrote, "I doubt that my students would have been able to gain this understanding had we not studied these two international texts."

The teacher implemented a unit which allowed her students to think, write, and speak about the way the texts and the class discussions impacted their learning of the issues (human rights, prejudice, and responsibility to others). Books are ideal for developing an understanding and acceptance of others. They can offer moving and compassionate perspectives on human beings and issues (Ladd, 1993). Students can learn empathy by taking the perspectives of characters in the books and, as a result, they feel the characters' emotions (Louie, 2006). Additionally, this study showed that books can assist students by helping them relate to the text and to critique the portrayal of stereotypes. Comparing and contrasting the two main characters in the two texts helped the students to understand that people are all the same, yet different, and that we may have different coping mechanisms and understandings.

Writings from students confirmed that these texts encouraged the 8th graders to identify with the narrators by the way the stories were described and expressed. Ben wrote about point of view: "Without Anne's diary and Annie living to write her story later, I wouldn't have been as interested in hearing about what they lived through, but because they were really telling their own stories, it made me want to keep reading. I should write about my life for generations to come. It would not be really be my story if my mom or dad wrote about my life. No one knows what's really in my mind but me, even though we all live in the same house."

In terms of characterization, Taylor wrote: "The authors did a good job of creating well-developed characters. That made me feel like I knew the characters. That made the books come alive for me. I was cheering them along and worried for them when fearful things were happening."

Discussion

Multicultural and international literature can be used effectively as a vehicle to bring important issues to the forefront and to facilitate learning. Today's classrooms are more and more diverse, however, not all classrooms are diverse and many students are culturally isolated. According to Freeman et al. (2007), the 2000 U.S. census found rural and small-town areas still lack diversity with 86% of the population being White in these areas. In these cases, books can help these students see diversity, even if it's lacking in their own lives.

As one country's children come to know and love the books from other countries, they start on a journey toward international understanding (Stan, 2002). Reading and discussing books allows children to discover a world beyond their own family and the community in which

they live. The voices of many individuals can be heard when students read multicultural and international texts. "Good literature creates empathy in readers, who, between the pages of books, enter the lives of others like and unlike themselves" (Lehman, 2007, p. 68). Utilizing a variety of literature, combined with rich discourse, can deepen students' understanding.

Many educational goals can be achieved through exposing children to multicultural and international literature (Rochman, 1993). For example, sharing the culture of a variety of groups allows children to see similarities. Misconceptions and stereotypes can be overcome by reading and discussing books (Ladd, 1993; Tomlinson, 1998). With this literature, students can learn about physical features, language, cultural practices, and customs human beings share along with similar feelings, needs and emotions. Additionally, children can learn respect and appreciation for the beliefs and values of cultures different from their own. Children's understandings will vary depending upon their own background and personal experiences.

Studying diversity encourages students to become a community of learners. Teachers can connect the literature to real world happenings and to the students' own lives. This can draw the class members closer as they learn more about others. Nonjudgmental learning must be a priority.

A good strategy for making global connections and introducing notable books is reading two related books (Angus, 2007; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Freeman et al., 2007). According to Freeman, et al. (2007), teachers might pair international books with other global literature. This can expand students' insights on and about perspectives of both books. "Perfect Pairs" are two different books, related in some way. These "Perfect Pairs" do not need to be highly similar, but they should provide interesting connections and contrasts because they are valuable for stimulating intertextuality (Freeman et. al, 2007).

The teaching strategy of pairing books can help students make connections with other people and other places. They can be utilized as learning experiences to explore social justice and diversity issues (Freeman et al., 2007) among others. Pairing books to compare and contrast enhances awareness of how literary elements are utilized by authors. This allows for a better understanding of each. "Reading aloud two related picture books, a picture book and an informational book, poetry and a book, or other books that go together in some way is a good strategy for introducing students to notable books for making global connections" (Angus, 2007, p. 143).

Well written books are powerful teaching tools. They engage students and inspire them to reflect on decisions they make and on their personal perspectives. They bring people together, help them travel the world and bridge our differences (Freeman & Lehman, 2001). Books serve as keys to global awareness and understanding (Angus, 2007). Children make a step toward international understanding when they come to know and love the stories of many countries (Freeman & Lehman, 2001).

Recommendations and Implications

Importance for Classroom Teachers

As the modern classroom changes faces, it reflects the fact that, as a whole, we are a diverse society (Freeman et al., 2007). Living in a diverse world, multicultural and international children's literature provides a valuable tool to introduce students to cultures that are unfamiliar to them, as well as to learn more about the cultures of their own heritage and background.

Learning about people from different backgrounds is of great importance. In today's society, we must live together, talk to one another, and seek to understand and appreciate each other's differences. We must be sensitive and be ready to revise our understandings, while learning as much as possible about others and their culture (Freeman & Lehman, 2001). Educators have an important role, to foster appreciation for others. Children must discover the uniqueness of each group of people and also know the commonalities that bind people together, regardless of creed, gender, nationality, intelligence, race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

Books are a powerful medium for understanding and sharing the world (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Tomlinson, 1998). Young children find it easier to assimilate new information when this information is presented within the structure of a story. Books can offer moving and compassionate perspectives on humans and issues (Ladd, 1993). Students can learn empathy by taking the perspectives of characters in the books and, as a result, they feel the characters' emotions (Louie, 2006). Through the use of high-quality multicultural and international children's literature, teachers can help students see the world through the perspectives of the characters, which may be different from their own (Zeece & Hayes, 2004).

Additionally, the books can assist students by helping children relate to the text and to critique the portrayal and stereotypes of the characters. Teachers need to be aware of mainstreaming going on in literature. Teachers should use books that represent cultures other than the mainstream cultures in their classroom (Yokota, 1993). Teachers need to create an environment that fosters mutual understanding. According to Rudine Sims Bishop (1997) this literature can help provide knowledge, offer varying perspectives, develop or promote an appreciation for diversity, give rise to critical inquiry, and provide enjoyment.

Utilizing literature allows children to make connections and link information to peek at life from a personal level. Students can relate and discuss the relationships in a story, as well as consider the story's setting and plot. Students also benefit from reading literature that reflects their own ethnic and cultural background as they gain an appreciation of their own family and the families of others (Freeman et al., 2007). Such literature can be an important tool to help students develop a healthy self-concept. They can compare pieces of literature to their own lives as they take on the perspectives of the characters, while putting themselves in similar situations and thinking about how they might respond.

Multicultural education is relevant to White children (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006). Students need to realize that other cultural groups may think and act in ways different from their own. Teachers need to know that readers can identify with characters, even though they may be

culturally or socially different from their own. Readers can appreciate the struggles and sacrifices of oppressed groups (Montero & Robertson, 2006).

Students can use the text and critique the portrayal and stereotypes found in the media. Teachers can guide students to appreciate the aspects of culture and the values of a culture that shape people's behavior. They can conduct rich discussions about life-changing events that will make a difference not only for the child, but ultimately for our world. This expands children's awareness and decreases negative stereotyping of individuals from other cultures (Stan, 2002). It helps build community.

Social-Emotional, Critical Thinking & Moral Character

Developing students' social-emotional, critical thinking, and moral character provides another benefit through the incorporation of this world-wide literature. These books provide opportunities for students to increase their empathy, to appreciate differences, and to dispel stereotypes. Classroom and group discussions are an ideal way to do this, projects and service learning opportunities can also play a role. Hazel Rochman (1993) states, "A good story lets you know people as individuals in all their particularity and conflict; and once you see someone as a person - flawed, complex, striving - then you've reached beyond stereotype. Stories, writing them, telling them, sharing them, transforming them, enrich us and connect us and help us know each other" (p. 19).

With multicultural and international books, children from "majority groups" increase their sensitivity to those who are different from themselves while improving their knowledge of the world (Rochman, 1993). Books can help children understand complicated relationships that contribute to problems and solutions. By helping children begin to understand the complexities of issues and not only think in terms of good and bad, books provide a valuable service (Ladd, 1993).

Students also realize although people have differences, they also share many similarities. Lehman (2007) stated, "Good literature creates empathy in readers, who, between the pages of books, enter the lives of others like and unlike themselves" (p. 68). Taking the perspective of others develops critical thinking skills for students. Teachers can start exploration with this by incorporating journal writing, reflective writing and classroom dialogue. Books allow readers to grow out of their own perspective, into a more global one (Ladd, 1993).

Multicultural and international literature allows minority students to see their own culture and to learn more about it (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Rochman, 1993; Stan, 2002). As a culture, children can find commonalities with the books' characters. Children use books to gather ideas and develop strategies to help them deal with issues in their lives.

World Peace & International Understanding

Some authors write about other cultures through a sensitive representation. This offers valuable insight and education for students. A major part of teaching literature should be placing more emphasis on the similarities and commonalities among people, not the differences. Many judgments are made about people within the first thirty seconds of meeting each other. These

decisions are made based on what is seen on the surface. One must remember that just like the roots of a tree are under the surface, so it is true with humans, and we must not be quick to judge.

Multicultural and international children's books help to promote world peace and international understanding (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Freeman et al., 2007; Lehman, 2007; Mo & Shen, 2003). For example, there are many complex and varied reasons why women wear veils in different Muslim societies. Keep in mind, many books written about Muslim women are written by Western professional women. Typically, they stereotype Muslim women as oppressed. These books show the assumption and beliefs of Western thought, not Muslim thought. *The Breadwinner* (2001), written by Deborah Ellis, is an ideal book for children to learn about life under the Taliban rule, although it shares one perspective.

Through the use of this type of literature, students discover that all people have the same needs, emotions, dreams and aspirations, and endure similar struggles. Becoming aware of similarities may help people diminish their fear of differences and, therefore, reduce chances of prejudice. Dispelling prejudice and building community through the use of books can make a positive difference for our world.

As a result of this teacher's research, she shared her findings with the school librarian. The teacher was pleased the school librarian did decide to order nearly all of the international and multicultural children's book titles the teacher had initially requested.

Limitations

A case study is a detailed examination of a single subject, a particular event, or a collection of documents (Merriam, 1998). In this qualitative research study, students' journals and essay responses, and audio-digital recordings were used to collect data from the students. The researcher also used observation field notes. These data sources were used to gain a holistic portrait of whether multi-cultural and international children's literature made a difference in the students' lives (or not). Utilizing a survey or questionnaire would have been of value in measuring the students' pre and post attitudes and beliefs; however, this was not incorporated into this study. Additionally, the author of this study makes no assertions about the findings being applicable to the lives of a larger population of students.

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the human. Research is only as good as the investigator. All interviews and the data analysis were filtered through the researcher's worldview, values, and perspectives. Therefore, the researcher brought a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998). "The researcher as human instrument is limited by being human. Mistakes can be made and opportunities can be missed." Personal biases may also interfere (Merriam, 1998, p. 23).

Bias refers to ways in which data collection or analysis is distorted by the researcher's theory, values or preconceptions. The researcher is aware of personal biases and the potential influence. This study is an interpretation of the participants' views filtered through the researcher's own views. Additionally, because the investigator of this study was also the students' teacher, the researcher's bias may be a limitation to this study.

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Beyond Alphabetic Literacy: Lessons from the Chinese

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Abstract

The notion of cuing systems in reading serves as a theoretical frame for this inquiry into Chinese reading pedagogy. Perspectives on Chinese reading instruction from a 2006 field study of Chinese educators are presented. Eighteen school teachers in Nanjing and Weihai were questioned about the way reading is taught in China. Informal observations of Chinese classrooms were also conducted. A brief description of the Chinese writing system is included. Collaborators were an American language and literacy educator and a Chinese academic specializing in English.

There was agreement among teacher–respondents on how Chinese literacy instruction is conducted in their centralized and uniform system. *Pinyin,* an alphabetic transliteration system enjoys wide, but limited use as an initial teaching alphabet. A variety of methods is employed to teach characters: visual discrimination, morphemic analysis; syntactic and textual context; pragmatic use, kinesthesia in writing. It is suggested that some of these techniques are relevant to American reading practice, if allowances for language differences are made.

Beyond Alphabetic Literacy: Lessons from the Chinese

Until we leave home, we need not reflect on our native language and customs; we take them as given. A Chinese proverb says: "Fish do not notice the water in which they swim." Travel forces a recognition that our culture is but one among many. We notice the English we speak is American rather than British; and that we eat not with chopsticks, but forks and knives. Our concept of alphabet changes when we realize Greek, Hebrew, Russian and Arabic writing differ from ours. In Asia, we discover that alphabets are not essential for literacy, since approximately a quarter of earth's inhabitants read without them. Some educators may not think this is relevant, since the children we teach in America learn letters and sounds. But exploring the practices of others yields valuable insights into our own approaches and blind spots. It was with this premise that an inquiry into Chinese reading instruction was undertaken by Gann in the summer of 2006 at the Oxford English Academy of Nanjing, and by Gann and Liu at the University of Shandong at Weihai in the fall of 2006.

Between June 2006 and July 2008, Gann spent nearly ten months in China on various university projects. Gann had worked as a reading teacher in American schools and was interested in how the Chinese approach reading instruction, given their language's non-alphabetic, ideographic system. Liu Wei, then a member of the English Department at Shandong University at Weihai, coauthored this article. Liu contacted the educators with whom we talked in Weihai, served as interpreter on many occasions, and participated in collecting and interpreting data. Collins joined the project in 2007 and assisted with data analysis. This article is written in Gann's voice.

Perspectives on Chinese Reading and Language

Characteristics of Chinese

To understand how the Chinese teach reading, one must know about their language and writing system. Some information about written Chinese is offered here for readers unfamiliar with the language. While this may seem a digression, it will help in understanding what follows. Because the material is streamlined and compressed to make it accessible; linguistic experts may rightly object that I have oversimplified.

Chinese utilizes thousands of characters; estimates as to their total run to over 100,000. Approximately 6000-7000 are in general use, with 2400 accounting for 99% of most Chinese text (Sheng ming jing wei, 2006). Writing systems evolve over thousands of years, and do not encode language uniformly; this is as true of the Chinese writing system as it is of our own. Some Chinese characters resemble what they represent; these are termed *pictographic*. For example, the Chinese word *men* meaning 'gate,' is written like this:

门

Figure 1. The character 'men' represents the word 'gate.'

This character resembles the traditional Chinese gate like the one in this photograph:
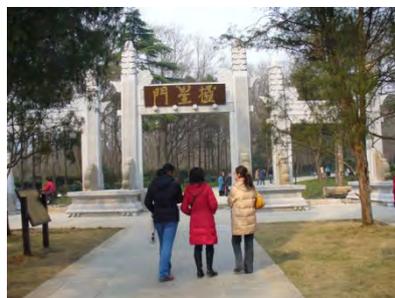

Figure 2. One of several campus gates, University of Shandong in Jinan.

However, most Chinese characters bear no graphic resemblance to what they encode, though; they are *ideographs*, abstract conventional symbols for concepts (Suk-Han, et al 2003). For instance, the character representing *che,* a word root meaning 'car' or 'vehicle', looks nothing like an automobile:

车

Figure 3.

Chinese characters were historically written with ink and brush; today only calligraphers write this way. But characters are tricky to produce even with pencil or ball point; so Chinese children learn "stroke order," a prescribed sequence for composing characters clearly; they also learn to perceive their shapes kinesthetically by tracing a

character on air or their palms. Most characters contain multiple elements, some representing ideas and some hinting at pronunciation. Here is an illustration: *Ni,* which means 'you,' is represented by the complex character below:

你

Figure 4.
The left hand portion is a character element representing a person. In the plural, *ni* becomes *nimen*. Two characters are used here: 'ni' and 'men.'

你们

Figure 5.
Here, *men* has nothing to do with gates; the gate-like symbol on the right is a *phonetic element*, a clue to sound (Tan, 1998). Character elements or *radicals* also offer clues as to meaning. The words represented below all bear some relation to water, a connection suggested by the pair of diagonal marks in the left hand corner of each; these are thought to be a pictographic representation of water (Lindqvist, 1989).

Table 1
Three words containing the water radical

Hai	海	Sea
Xi	洗	to wash
Jiang	江	River

Thus Chinese characters encode language several ways: pictographically, ideographically, and phonetically. Similarly, English has multiple patterns of alphabetic encoding; 'save' and 'have' do not rhyme, nor do 'tough' and 'through,' and the morpheme 'on,' which means 'unit' is pronounced differently in 'once,' 'none,' and 'alone' (Watkins, 2000).

Views from the West

Recent investigations focus on phonological aspects of Chinese reading instruction, and the benefits of *pinyin*, a system of representing Chinese characters using the Roman alphabet adopted by the People's Republic of China in 1979. Rayner, K. et al. (2002) assert that *pinyin's* use in initial Chinese reading instruction proves the system is phonetic. Similarly, Goswami (2005) argues that phonological awareness is a requirement for reading any language, but this term is not defined by the author; nor is its connection to Chinese literacy explored. Goswami states characters are learned by rote, but does not consider this is also the case with difficult English spellings. Unger (1977) also believes memorization plays a key role Chinese reading pedagogy, but distinguishes between "unthinking" memorization and "memorization with understanding." Perfetti (2003) argues that every system of writing encodes speech, calling this a "Universal grammar of reading," a point which is overstated. Admittedly, there is always a connection between writing and spoken language, but we do not speak exactly as we write, nor write exactly as we speak: An English conversation would be unlikely to end with "Sincerely yours." Perfetti argues that phonemic awareness is essential for reading Chinese, citing the use of *pinyin* in Chinese primary school and the phonetic nature of some Chinese radicals and character components. Later, Perfetti hedges by stating characters represent morphemes as well as sounds. The wide differences between Chinese dialects employing this writing system are never addressed. The one-sided focus on phonology stems from the misperception that Chinese orthography is at bottom, exactly like English. It smacks of ethnocentrism.

Another group of investigators views Chinese reading more broadly. Unger (1977) notes a contextualized form of instruction emphasizing chanting and memorization. Pope (1982) describes an authoritarian but varied style of instruction utilizing choral recitation and context clues, pictorial association, and stroke order. Sheridan (1992) notes the Chinese teach reading concurrently with the standard dialect or *Putonghua,* known as Mandarin in the West. This author sees Chinese literacy education as an integration of repeated oral reading, standard language instruction, observation, and training in kinesthetic techniques such as palm writing. Tao & Zao (1997) believe the Chinese learn to read not by rote memorization, nor by isolated phonological mapping, but by a combination of socially embedded practices: oral, visual, semantic, phonetic, historic and cultural.

Borrowings from the West and Limitations

Mao Zedong was influenced by the phonological approach and favored "reforming" Chinese writing into a Westernized alphabetic system (Bao-yun & Ji-Ping, 1985). In the 1970's, it was thought that character writing would eventually give way to *pinyin*. However, Zhou En-lai opposed Romanization (Sheridan, 1990) and ultimately, the Chinese found Latinization culturally unacceptable (Pope, 1982). This was partly because of the profound cultural difference between ideographic and alphabetic writing. Also, the huge number of homophones in Chinese and the variations between spoken dialects made alphabetic conversion impractical. With today's Chinese software which uses the alphabetic pinyin as its basis, computer keys may be used in producing characters, thereby obviating a major disadvantage of ideographic writing. One rarely sees *pinyin* in stores or public buildings in China; when the Chinese wish to communicate with Westerners, they post information in English, which now functions as an international language. It is extremely unlikely an alphabetic system will replace the ideographic writing system of Chinese.

The reform that was ultimately introduced in 1956 involved, not the elimination of characters in favor of an alphabet, but character simplification. While a plus for literacy education, this change makes it difficult for younger people to read traditional Chinese. *Pinyin*, which is translated as "spelling the sound," is now used as an initial teaching alphabet, a pronunciation guide in Chinese dictionaries (Li & Upward, 1992), and a computer and cell phone input code for the production of Chinese characters. *Pinyin* is an important addition to Chinese pedagogy, for though 80% of Chinese characters contain phonetic elements offering approximate clues as to sound, these are reliable only 39% of the time (Sheridan, 1990). Similarly, the patterns of English orthography can be inconsistent with pronunciation. Consider: dome and come; have and cave; rough and through; word and cord. English contains hundreds of such irregularities, but we overlook them because they are so familiar. Given the mismatch of English sounds and its writing system, might American educators have something to learn from those who teach reading in China?

Inquiry and Methods

Investigation

When educational methods are studied, the voice of K-12 practitioners is often overlooked. In the summer of 2006, under the sponsorship of Nanjing Department of Education and the Oxford English Academy of Nanjing, Gann led a ten-day program in English language pedagogy for middle and high school teachers. Gann was curious what Chinese classroom teachers would say about their reading pedagogy. During lunch breaks, fifty-eight teacher participants were invited to take part in a short interview about Chinese reading instruction. It was not possible to standardize interview conditions. While the

teachers had excellent English, there was no Chinese collaborator to interpret cultural practices at this stage, and many teachers seemed wary of involvement. Eleven Nanjing school teachers volunteered. At times, interviews were done individually, and sometimes in pairs or groups of three. To avoid making participants anxious, no notes were taken during interviews, but aggregated responses were recorded soon after. Interviews varied in length from twenty and forty minutes. Total interview time in Nanjing was approximately three and a half hours. These were the questions used:

1. How are children taught to read in China?
2. Do Chinese children begin school able to identify or write any characters?
3. Which is easier for Chinese children—the simplified characters or Pinyin?
4. Do any of your children have trouble learning to read Chinese? Describe this, please.
5. If reading difficulties arise, what is done?
6. Describe the involvement of Chinese parents in teaching children to read.
7. At what point in their education do Chinese children begin studying English?
8. What difficulties do Chinese children experience in learning to read English?

 In the fall of 2006, Gann moved to the University of Shandong at Weihai for a semester-long teaching assignment. Liu Wei, a member of the English faculty, joined the project at this point. His contacts in the Weihai educational community, his balanced mastery of Chinese and English, and his extensive knowledge of both Western and Chinese culture were invaluable. We focused on an elementary school near the university where many, but not all of the children came from educated families. Classes were large— usually between 65 and 70 students. The large class enrollment was partly a result of the school's prestige; for parents sometimes petition officials to include their children in top-rated schools and this may cause overcrowding. Class size is smaller in many places (Qi Fengyi, 2008). We interviewed seven of the teachers and the principal, making use of the questionnaire. All of the educators were familiar with English; Liu Wei translated when necessary. As in Nanjing, teacher-participants were interviewed individually or in groups as seemed appropriate. The principal selected respondents. Interviews length varied from thirty to sixty minutes. Total interview time in Weihai was approximately four hours. Notes were made after the interviews and compiled in aggregate form.

At the principal's invitation, we also observed primary school reading lessons in selected classes, grades one through three. Gann took extensive notes, and Liu Wei helped to contextualize observations at post-session meetings. Like the interview data, the classroom notes were compiled in aggregate form and reviewed qualitatively.

Results of the Inquiry

Teacher Responses

Chinese reading instruction is uniform. A foundation for literacy learning is laid during three years of Kindergarten, now offered throughout The People's Republic of China, some rural areas excepted. During Kindergarten, children are exposed to characters and literature, but not in the structured way later utilized in elementary school. Formal Chinese reading instruction begins in first grade with the Romanized, phonologically based *pinyin*. After the first two months of first grade, when it is systematically presented, *pinyin* is paired with conventional characters. Its use continues in grades one through three, after which it is phased out, like training wheels on a bicycle. Teachers were in agreement about its utility, though because of its Western origin, some Chinese are sensitive about its use (Chen, 2006); for reading practices have sociopolitical overtones. The teachers considered *pinyin* easier to master than Chinese characters. As in America, exposure to reading prior to starting school is important; children from educated families arrive in first grade having absorbed hundreds of characters informally. Children from less literate families often have trouble, and in classes of 65 to 70, there is little opportunity for individual instruction. Teachers are sensitive to the problem of providing help for such children and encourage parents to work with struggling students. There are many hours of homework, and ambitious parents work with children beyond what is required for school. Educational materials are readily available in supermarkets and bookstores; however, children from the poorest families sometimes lack access to these, and their parents are not always sufficiently educated to help them. The Chinese view academic success as more the product of effort than intelligence; therefore students with difficulties are normally kept with their peers, with foundering learners separated from the mainstream only if the trouble is considered severe.

English instruction is an established part of the Chinese curriculum, beginning usually by the fifth grade and sometimes earlier. Rural schools have less access to English. Though familiar with the Roman alphabet from *pinyin*, Chinese children have difficulty with our alphabetic system. To students brought up with ideographic writing, alphabetic representation seems illogical, especially in English where the encoding is so irregular.

To comprehend Chinese writing, children must acquire the dialect variously known as *Putonghua* (common speech)*,* Mandarin, and Modern Standard Chinese. There are at least seven major dialects spoken in China, and even more sub-dialects though the exact number is in dispute. Some of these are mutually unintelligible, so written Chinese and *Putonghua* play an important unifying role in the People's Republic. The Standard Language is closest to the speech of Northeastern China, especially the areas nearest Beijing (Rogers, 2005). *Putonghua* is used universally in Chinese education. Educators say children who do not speak it natively learn *Putonghua* easily, because of its early introduction and widespread use.

The Chinese Classroom

Literacy is essential to any industrialized country, and China is developing rapidly. The size of China's population makes mass education a gargantuan undertaking. The population of China is 1.3 billion— roughly the population of the United States with a billion people added. With numbers so large, there is of necessity an emphasis on order and conformity in Chinese society, including school. From a Western perspective, Chinese schools make extraordinary demands on children's self-discipline. Classes of 65 to 70 are nothing unusual. Children face front as they sit upon backless stools three to a small wooden table, with boys and girls intermingled. There are strictly enforced rules governing placement of hands and feet, to prevent students from encroaching on each other's space. When seated, children are expected to be virtually immobile unless lifting a pencil or turning a page. However, lessons are fast-paced. When called on, children jump to their feet with great enjoyment. A ten-minute recess occurs every couple of hours, and children moved about freely, engaging in games, but careful to return on time. I am told these breaks are more frequent in some parts of China and classes are smaller. Children are extremely respectful to teachers, and there appears to be strong affection between teachers and students. Discipline is effective and occurs in private. Shame is used liberally, but physical punishment is forbidden by law, though there is some debate on whether mild physical punishment might be productively used. The school day is longer than in America.

It is difficult to separate curriculum from setting. Some elements of the classroom are so familiar as to make the American educator smile. Even if one cannot read the class rules or inspirational sayings, pragmatic context makes clear what they are. At the front of the room are the national flag and a chalkboard; above it is often a picture of Mao Zedong, still respected as the founder of the People's Republic of China, though his place in the nation's history is being reexamined. Student art, exemplary work, and a motivational chart hang on the wall. A teacher stands while instructing, usually on a raised platform at the front of the room; occasionally she moves around. (All the elementary teachers we met were women). Teachers have a clear and uniform style of writing the large characters presented at the chalkboard. They point to characters in context, use flash cards and even power point. Children raise hands to be recognized. They chant text in unison or aloud at their own pace. These are frequently noisy procedures, but children seem on task. Rote memorization, while utilized, is not employed in isolation. Teachers demonstrate how to recognize patterns and discriminate between similar characters. Children are asked to underline specific characters in a story; then they are asked to underline specific ideas in text. Except in first grade, *pinyin* is downplayed. There seemed to be some variation in how *pinyin* was utilized in materials we examined. In some, there was line-by-line translation of characters into *pinyin*; others used *pinyin* occasionally and relied more on pictorial cues.

Symbolic mapping is often important as children memorize a traditional rhyme or saying; afterwards, they are shown its representation in characters, and chant the text multiple times. As noted earlier, kinesthetic techniques are prominent. Standardized order of strokes is required for forming characters; for it is difficult to draw a character correctly unless standard

stroke order is employed. Students sometimes trace characters in the air or the palms of their hands.

<div align="center">**Discussion**</div>

Reading and Visual Discrimination

Of necessity, Chinese reading instruction involves development of visual memory. Word recognition is a visual process even in an alphabetic system, a fact which we in the West are apt to overlook because is so obvious.   Smith (1994) downplays the role of the eyes in reading, though he acknowledges the need for some visual information to allow the brain to assimilate meaning (pp. 65-67). Likewise Goodman (1996) stresses the non-visual, meaning-making aspects of reading, even as he discusses its graphic nature. Similarly, Smith (1994) asserts that the role vision plays in reading is over-emphasized. But whole language theorists are not alone in down-playing the visual aspects of reading. Adams, after asserting that reading is visually driven, gives phonemic awareness a far greater emphasis (1990). Informal observations in American classrooms suggest that apart from occasional "word shape" charts, for the teaching of so-called "sight-words," reading classrooms reflect an increasingly phonological bias. When more balanced instruction is attempted, there is greater contextual emphasis, but visual discrimination continues to get short shrift. But careful attention to distinctions in spelling may hasten word recognition: compare *like* and *lake*; *change* and *chance*.   Obviously, English is not ideographic like Chinese, but our writing system is also highly irregular. We may be ignoring a useful instructional modality by the limited stress on visual cues.

Reading and politics

Cultures will favor particular modes of reading instruction, and these are not solely based on utility; politico-cultural factors play a role (Leman, 1997). In the United States, ideological camps lock horns over appropriate ways to teach reading. Liberals gravitate toward holistic instruction because the system seems less constrained. Conservatives are apt to prefer part-to-whole instruction which seems more orderly and disciplined, a controversy which Leman (1997) dubbed the "Reading Wars." These stances are based on unprovable premises, with both camps obdurately insisting they are right, mustering dissimilar sorts of research to buttress their claims. Those who actually teach reading are more likely to consider the effectiveness of methods a matter of student learning style, but their more moderate voices are heard less often. Politicization of reading instruction is not limited to the United States. In Taiwan, reading education and practice diverge from their mainland counterparts. Taiwanese education eschews the simplified Chinese characters promoted by Mao Zedong and used throughout the People's Republic. And though it is extremely unusual, Chinese from the People's Republic may argue against the use of *pinyin* in early reading instruction because of the code's Western basis (Chen, 2007). Literacy, native language, and the methods chosen to teach young children to read are bound up with sense of identity, and the controversies make people passionate.

Writing Systems and Cuing Systems

Reading is a complex cognitive process in which readers construct meaning from graphic symbols. Goodman's (1967) ground-breaking work on cuing systems in reading described it as "a psycholinguistic guessing game." In this framework, reading is viewed as the competent use of four cuing systems, distinct but interrelated: semantic, syntactic, graphophonic, and pragmatic (Goodman, 1996, Smith,1994, Vacca et. al, 2008). Goodman (1996)purports to view speech and writing as separate languages, a perspective which seems overstated, given the close interrelation of written and spoken language; for while we do not begin conversations "Once upon a time," there is a close association of written and spoken discourses in syntax, vocabulary and the creation of meaning through text. Goodman uses the term 'semantic cuing' to describe the use of context and word knowledge to derive meaning from text. Syntactic cuing employs grammatical cues to aid comprehension. In alphabetic languages, graphophonic cues link written symbols to sound, though the connection is often irregular in languages like our own. The pragmatic cuing system concerns how text is actually used: children connect the symbol for Coca-Cola with soft drinks, though they cannot decode its cursive. Westerners viewing the home page for Chinese Google may identify the character for "search," though they would not know it in isolation.

Writing Systems and Dialects

The written form of a language varies less than its spoken dialects, and it is typically the dialects highest in prestige which written language encodes. Children who do not speak the prestige codes natively may experience difficulty acquiring literacy (Purcell-Gates, 1997) and those who do have a certain advantage (Smitherman, 2001). Dialect difference is a difficult notion for many Americans. Some educators reject the concept, preferring to view some language varieties as "right" and others as "wrong." Therefore, instruction in Standard American English is often judgmental, a stance which interferes with its own success by disparaging how students talk. Chinese dialects, by contrast, vary so much that many linguists consider Chinese to be not a single language, but a group of related tongues (Rogers, 2005). Of necessity, *Putonghua,* the language of Northern China is taught specifically and used matter-of-factly throughout Chinese education, though with regional variation.

Language, orthography, and instruction

Writing systems are connected to the spoken language they encode. Because of the differences between the Chinese and English language orthography, literacy cues are differently utilized in instruction. Table 2 contrasts how Chinese and English literacy instruction employs these four cuing systems.

Table 2

Cross-cultural comparisons: Cuing systems and methods

Cuing system	Chinese pedagogy	English pedagogy
Graphophonic	Pinyin, analysis of characters for phonetic elements. Rimes do not offer assistance in decoding.	Phonics: Analysis of onsets and rimes; sound segmentation and blending, nonsense words in some methods.
Ideophonetic/ pictophonetic	Ideographic/ pictophonetic mapping; visual discrimination

graphic/ phonetic mapping; repetitive chanting

Practice unmonitored read alouds in groups: face saving.

Kinesthetic, "stroke order." | Whole word recognition; use of logos

group reading, chanting (some use)

Emphasis on Individual out loud reading. High stress.

Occasional tracing and tracing on air |
| Pragmatic | Socially embedded use provides cue as to meaning of texts: repeated viewing in social contexts | Socially embedded use provides cue as to meaning. Informal absorption through advertising |
| Syntactic | Specific grammatical use provides cue to meaning and pronunciation. | Specific grammatical use provides cue to meaning and pronunciation. |
| Semantic | Specific grammatical use provides cue to meaning and pronunciation.

Direct teaching of morphemes, which give important semantic cues; character parts often correspond to morphemes.

Individual words are inferred from meaningful context. | Specific grammatical use provides cue to meaning and pronunciation.

Less emphasis on direct teaching of morphemes, especially in the earlier grades.

Individual words are inferred from meaningful context. |

In America, educators speak of the graphophonic system, since alphabetic symbols are used to encode sound. Encoding of sound is also involved in written Chinese, with phonetic connections to ideographs and pictographs. One may therefore speak of an ideophonetic/ pictophonetic cuing system in Chinese; it plays an analogous role to the graphophonic cuing system in English. *Pinyin* introduces a graphophonic element into early Chinese reading pedagogy, but as previously noted its use is quite limited. Analysis of onsets and rimes, sound segmentation and blending cannot be employed to teach Chinese characters. But the teaching of sight words and use of shape charts and logos in American classrooms is comparable to the Chinese emphasis on visual discrimination emphasis and sight/ symbol mapping. Such attention to visual cues could be profitably used in English reading instruction, for the framework provided by phonics is less than reliable: consider *there*, *have,* and *once.*

In both cultures, children read aloud, and choral chanting is utilized for practice. In China, repeated chanting of culturally significant texts helps children connect with the complex written code. Similarly in America, children learn to read nursery rhymes and stories heard in preschool. Specific use of texts builds an awareness of print's pragmatic use in both cultures. Children know how sentences and phrases are formed in their native language, though they are not able to state grammatical rules in the abstract (Pinker, 1994). As they draw on this base of linguistic knowledge, they infer meaning from text. Such language knowledge forms the basis of syntactic cuing, and, when combined with awareness of context, semantic cuing. Children are also aware of morphology, the patterns their language utilizes for assembling words. In Chinese, these morphemes, or meaningful word parts are often represented as character parts or radicals, and Chinese reading instruction stresses connection between morphemes and written symbols. American educators place more emphasis on the link between orthography (written symbols) and sound. The nature of the two writing systems accounts for part of this difference; but pedagogical tradition is operative as well. This is also true of instruction in contextual cues. Because the phonetic cues of Chinese are even less reliable than those of English, contextual mapping assumes a more prominent role in Chinese pedagogy. While not absent in the American reading classroom, the use of context may take a back seat in relation to phonics, especially in certain systems of reading instruction (Adams, 1990).

Use of Touch or Kinesthesia in Teaching Written Symbols

Use of touch or kinesthesia in teaching written symbols is less prominent in American pedagogy than Chinese, but is not entirely absent; for just as reading is by nature visual, writing is always kinesthetic. Chinese reading pedagogy emphasizes how a character "feels" when it is written on paper with properly ordered strokes, sketched in the air, or outlined on the child's palm. An analogous emphasis on the kinesthetic elements of writing instruction

would be possible in American literacy education and might be especially productive for tactile learners.

Conclusion: Pedagogies, commonalities and codes

Because Chinese and English encode language differently, cross-cultural borrowing of reading instruction strategies may not appear productive at first. This is especially true if Chinese writing is presumed to be a series of pictures, or where English orthography is thought to be entirely phonetic. The realities are far more complex: English is not fully decodable using its alphabet (Smith, 1994) and modern Chinese, while primarily ideographic, has phonetic elements. In both languages, comprehension is effected through multiple cuing systems, cultural, grammatical, and contextual. While the writing systems are different, learners of each must learn how sound, syntax and meaning are encoded, and comprehend how writing is used by the culture.

Some educators may see no need to move outside our culture for ways of improving literacy. The term itself is at times problematic, since literacy means different things to different people (Wood, 2002). One might argue that the National Center for Education Statistics' estimate of the American illiteracy as 21-23% was overstated, due to the measurements used (2002). But serious gaps in American literacy are agreed to exist, and it would seem reasonable that we learn all we can from whomever we can.

Our observations did not support earlier work by Perfetti (2003), Goswami (2005), and Rayner (2002), which argued for the primacy of phonological awareness in Chinese reading instruction. Our investigation was more consistent with the work of investigators who actually spent time in Chinese classrooms: Sheridan (1992), Pope (1982), Unger (1977), Tao & Zao (1997). Pope's (1982) observations, made during the Cultural Revolution (1980-1987), characterized the system as "authoritarian," and the term may have been accurate for that era. But while the classrooms we observed were teacher-centered, there was warmth and levity present. Far more than our own, the Chinese system encourages memorization; Goswami (2005) and Unger (1977) viewed this practice as rote learning; however, Tao & Zao (1997), and Sheridan (1992) saw memorization as one of several interlocking processes used to inculcate literacy in China. Likely these observers saw similar processes at work, but interpreted differently the task-focused nature of Chinese reading instruction.   Our observations support the perspective that literacy is a complex language process grounded in culture (Purcell-Gates 1995).

Understanding that the languages differ, what can we learn from the way Chinese children are taught to read? There are, it seems to us, several ways in which we might learn from the Chinese: by stressing visual discrimination, phonetic mapping, and morphemic awareness in reading instruction; and by emphasizing kinesthesia in writing. A review of reading studies by Strickland and Shanahan (2004) indicates that of eleven areas in early reading instruction, visual memory is the least researched, though its value in teaching

irregular words in English is clear. The choral chanting practiced in Chinese schools but only occasionally seen in American classrooms might be productively increased in this country, as could individual unmonitored "read alouds," for oral practice. Compared with reading before one's classmates, these methods are low pressure and "face-saving"; and while the latter consideration has special importance in China, it might well inform teaching in the U.S., since any child may feel shame.

Our pedagogy might also benefit from an increased focus on morphology (word construction and roots), for English orthography is built around these, more than it is individual sounds. In teaching related words with unpredictable spellings, we might stress connections to common morphemes or words roots: 'once,' 'only,' and 'none,' have the common root 'on,' meaning 'one' (Watkins, 2000). Recent studies (Baumann & Kame'enui, 2004), (Baumann et. al. 2002) have shown the effectiveness of morphology for upper elementary vocabulary instruction; the process might begin earlier. We might also take more account of kinesthetic aspects of writing, for all children, not just for those with motor problems (Zwiani & Wallen, 2006).

To learn from others involves humility, a trait never easily acquired. But if we are wise, we will respect educators from other cultures, learning from their experience as they learn from us. This is the challenge and privilege of an increasingly global age. By investigating the multiple ways in which people on the other side of the planet approach the teaching of reading, we may further understand of the commonalities of literacy acquisition in any society. And, we may come away with a valuable gift—new methods of nurturing reading development in our own.

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Examining Criminal Justice Student Attitudes Toward Reading From a Diverse Perspective

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Examining Attitudes Toward Reading From a Diverse Perspective

Introduction

College students' matriculation in undergraduate education has been found to be strongly

correlated with students' development of academic skills, which include their reading ability

(Hermida, 2009). In a study conducted by Hermida, she found that university students often lack

the reading skills needed to be successful within a university setting. Hermida also found that a

key to successful matriculation within any college student's declared major is a complete

understanding of the operationalization of key vocabulary. Hermida states:

> Learning a discipline involves developing familiarity with the ways of being, thinking,
> writing, and seeing the world of those exerts in the discipline. Reading academic texts
> published by those disciplinary experts permits students to immerse in the culture of the
> discipline and facilitates learning its conventions, discourse, skills, and knowledge. (p.
> 21)

Understanding college students' attitudes and practices toward reading should be viewed

as essential in the development and implementation of pedagogical techniques that are discipline

specific. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) concur with the notion that disciplinary literacy should

be addressed stating a need exists for explicit teaching of sophisticated genres, specialized

language conventions, disciplinary norms of precision and accuracy, and higher-level

interpretive processes.

As students' attitudes and practices toward reading change, it is imperative that

college/university faculty recognize the change in behavior and develop new techniques that will

adapt to those changes. Perhaps one problem we face with today's college readers is best

captured by Sam Clements, "Those who can read and don't are no better off that those who

can't." Researchers (Salter & Brook, 2007) have sounded the alarm regarding aliteracy, defined

by Mikulecky (1978) as knowing how to read but choosing not to do so. McLemee (2004)

speculates that American **aliteracy** will only deepen over the next generation because of the

steep decline in reading among young adults, ages 18 to 24. Goodwin (1996) argued that

although aliteracy may begin at an early age, it is his belief that most college students have the

ability to read on a college level, they just don't read. This lack of motivation to read impacts

student performance in the classroom and academic achievement. Researchers suggest that

college students have little or no interest in reading; therefore, instructors must develop ways to

encourage students to read (Nathan, et al. 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the attitudes toward reading of students enrolled

in introductory criminal justice courses. The results of this investigation will allow instructors to

understand attitudes and practices toward leisure and required reading of these students.

Understanding students' attitudes and reading practices will offer insight into how students learn

and can allow instructors to develop more creative ways of conveying information to students.

Review of Literature

Studies have been conducted that measure attitudes toward reading among students in

secondary education (Nickoli, et al., 2003)**.** Myrberg and Rosén (2009) found that family history

(reading to children in the home), positive role models that encourage reading, and owning

personal books in the home (having children's books available in the home) all contribute to

positive adulthood attitudes toward reading. Hendel and Harrold (2004) examined undergraduate

students' attitudes toward reading over the past three decades and found that there is an overall

decrease in students' interest in reading as they spend more time taking part in other activities

such as watching television and other social leisure activities.

Previous research (Mateos, Villalon, Jose de Dios, & Martin, 2007) found that modes of

reading and writing require the acquiring, processing and communicating of knowledge. These

processes are not the same across all disciplines and mastering a particular discipline requires knowing how to interpret the codes and conventions, its texts and its way of producing them (Mateos, et al.). Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) identified some common demands of disciplinary literacy: (a) decode multi-syllabic words quickly and easily, (b) respond with automaticity to words that do not appear with high frequency in text, (c) interpret and respond appropriately to less common forms of punctuation, (d) know the meanings of a larger corpus of vocabulary terms, (e) maintain attention to more extended discourse, (f) monitor their own comprehension, (g) access to more complex forms of text organization, and begin critical response. The results of their investigation led them to conclude that the nature of the disciplines must be communicated to students; along with the ways experts approach the reading of text. Students' text comprehension benefits when students approach different texts with different lenses. No specific investigations into the reading demands in criminal justice courses have been completed; however, diversity among reading assignments can be found in various courses in the major which include classes/readings such as law, policing, corrections, and homeland security. Likewise, within the academic field of criminal justice/criminology there has been no research on how instructors convey the importance of reading to students.

If disciplinary reading is essential to increased performance in content classes, so, too, is motivation to read in the discipline as well as motivation to learn. Ormrod (2008) identifies several key effects that motivation has on students' learning and behavior: (a) motivation directs behavior toward particular goals; (b) motivation leads to increased effort and energy; (c) motivation increases initiation and persistence in activities; (d) motivation affects cognitive processes; (e) motivation determines which consequences are reinforcing and punishing, and (f) motivation often enhances performance. Developing an understanding of students' attitudes

toward reading will allow instructors to better understand students' motivations, which, in turn, will allow instructors to develop teaching techniques that will nurture/develop students' positive attitudes toward reading by selecting and creating assignments that promote an interest in the subject matter and an eagerness to read.

Methods

Understanding attitudes and reading practices are important in understanding how students learn. In previous studies, researchers have found a positive relationship between adolescent attitudes toward reading and their home environment (Nickoli, Hendricks, Hendricks & Smith, 2003). This study adds to the literature by exploring the attitudes and practices of students enrolled in an introductory criminal justice course.

Participants and procedures

A total of 152 college students enrolled in an introductory criminal justice course in a state-supported Midwestern university participated in this study. The survey was administered to students in the third week of school in the fall of 2009; given that most students enrolled in the course were in the first year of college, the researchers believed that administering the survey during the first weeks of school allowed students to document their attitudes toward reading that were unattached to their attitudes toward reading course materials that may taint their overall attitude due to their dislike of a particular subject matter.

Instrument

The *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment Survey* (Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980) was used to measure attitudes toward reading. Additional questions were added to the survey to measure reading practices of the participants in the study. The instrument was previously modified by Hendricks, Nickoli, Hendricks and Thomas (2002) to measure college

students' attitudes toward reading in various majors. The *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment Survey* (Tullock-Rhody & Alexander) has been used by various other researchers to measure attitudes toward reading. The survey includes 25 statements that allow students to respond with a five point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Scores range from a low of 25 to a high of 125. Additional items were added to more fully investigate students' attitudes and practices toward reading.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using univariate descriptive analysis, which allowed for each variable to be analyzed independently. The total sample size was 152 students. Of the students, 67 were females (44.1%) and 85 were (55.9%) males. A total of 126 (82.9%) students were identified as Caucasian, while 14 (9.2%) students identified themselves as African American. A total of 12 (8%) students identified themselves as Asian, Native American, Hispanic, or other.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

An examination of the data suggests that the variables can be categorized into two distinct groupings: (a) reading practices and (b) attitudes toward reading. Using these two categories allowed an examination of the patterns separately because it was possible for students to report positive attitudes toward reading but, because of other variables, to report poor reading practices.

Reading Practices

When examining students' overall reading practices a clear pattern emerged. Overall, students reported having poor reading practices (see Table 1). A total of 61.8% of students reported that they did not read a lot, while 52.6 % of students reported not reading during their free time.

When asked if students preferred to stay home and read, only 28.2 % agreed with this statement and only 17.1 % of students stated they read for enjoyment at least one hour a day. These findings are consistent with findings from other studies that examined college students reading practices. Galik's (1999) study of college students' recreational reading habits found that 63% of the students read two hours or less each week. Hendel and Harrold (2004) examined how university students' leisure interests have changed over the past three decades. They found that the number of students who reported reading for leisure decreased from 65.4% to 38.6% in 2001.

Examining students' access to reading material can offer some insight into their dislike for reading. A total of 37.5% of the students reported having a lot of books in their room at home. These findings support the supposition that students do not read a lot due to their limited access to books in the their living environments (Nickoli et al., 2003). Nickoli et al. found that students who grew up with books in their home environment were more frequent readers as adults and tended to report a more positive attitude toward reading. When asked about the frequency that students buy books, 49.3% of the students reported that they seldom buy books; 27% reported that they like to receive books as gifts, and only 35.5% of the students reported sharing books with their friends.

Given that the population of this study was college students, questions geared toward library usage seemed relevant. A total of 62.5% of the students reported that they generally did not check books out of the library and 41.1% reported never checking books out of the library. When student were asked if they preferred obtaining information from the Internet, 63.2 % reported that is their preferred form of information gathering. With advances in technology and the universal access of the World Wide Web, students did not see a need to visit libraries or other locations that would historically been seen as necessary. To complete assignments, obtain

newspapers, and read magazines, students now access the information from their homes,

lessening the need to go to the library. Students are thereby limiting their indirect and direct

contact with books by not seeing an apparent need to go to the library (Salter & Brook, 2007).

Reading Attitudes

A series of questions were asked to determine students' overall attitudes toward reading.

When asked whether or not students agreed with the statement, "You love to read," 30.9%

reported agreeing with this statement, while 53.9% disagreed with this statement, and 14.5%

were undecided. When asked if reading was boring, 37.5% indicated that reading was boring

while 38.2% did not think so, and 24.3% were undecided (see Table 2). This finding is supported

by other studies that examined college students' attitudes toward reading. Salter and Brook

(2007) found the idea of students being aliterate is something that all individuals who work in

higher education must begin to acknowledge in their pedagogical techniques. The researchers

found that reading was not a preferred leisure activity (Salter & Brook, 2007). When students

were asked if they believed that reading was a waste of time, 65.8% of students reported that

they did not believe that reading was a waste of time. This finding suggests that students

understand the value of reading although they may not participate in the activity on a regular

basis. This finding was highlighted by the students' response to the statement, "You really get

excited about books you have read." A total of 29.6% of the students agreed with this statement

while 52.6% disagreed and 17.8 were undecided. Only 27% of the students reported using books

as a way to escape their problems.

Overall the students in this study reported negative practices and attitudes toward

reading. Students seemed to recognize the importance of reading but did not actively practice

constructive reading habits nor did they have positive attitudes when it came to reading. The

findings of this study are supported by previous research that found a negative connection

between college students' attitudes and reading practices (Galik, 1999; Hendel & Harrold, 2004;

Mokhtari, Reichard & Gardner, 2007).

Table 1

Reading Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
Reading Practices	**%**	**n**	**%**	N	**%**	n
You seldom read except when you have to do a book report.	52	79	33.5	51	14.5	22
You generally check out a book when you go to the library.	25.6	39	62.5	95	11.2	17
It takes you a long time to read a book.	41.4	63	43.4	62	17.1	26
You like to share books with your friends.	35.5	54	44.8	68	19.1	29
You make fun of people who read a lot.	7.9	12	81.6	124	9.9	15
I read for enjoyment at least one-hour a day	17.1	26	74.3	113	7.9	12
I prefer to get my information from the Internet	63.2	96	14.5	22	21.7	33
You read a book or magazine at least once a day.	55.9	85	31.6	44	13.2	30

Table 2

Attitudes Toward Reading

Attitudes Toward Reading	Agree %	n	Disagree %	n	Undecided %	n
You feel you have better things to do than read.	53.3	81	24.3	37	22.4	34
You are willing to tell people that you do not like to read.	56.6	86	35.5	54	7.9	12
You get really excited about books you have to read	29.6	45	52.6	80	17.8	27
You love to read.	30.9	47	53.9	82	14.5	22
You think reading is a waste of time.	14.5	22	65.8	100	19.7	30
You think reading is boring.	37.5	57	38.2	58	24.3	37
You think people are strange when they read a lot.	7.9	12	81.6	124	17.8	5
You like to read to escape from problems.	27	40	57.9	88	15.5	23
You would rather someone just tell you information so that you won't have to read to get it.	52.6	80	32.3	48	14.5	22
You hate reading.	30.3	46	55.9	85	13.2	20

Discussion

Very little research has been conducted on students' discipline specific attitudes and practices toward reading. This research contributes to the development of an area of criminology/criminal justice that focuses on how students learn in this area of social science. Gabbidon and Richards (2002) suggest continued investigation into how students who choose to major in criminal justice/criminology study and learn is needed because general information on teaching and learning in higher education can be limited in scope.

As we begin to think about this generation and future generations of students, we should not take for granted that there will be an inherently positive attitude toward reading. We must start thinking outside of the box and recognize that because of technological advances, the traditional practice of assigning a chapter to be read within a particular time frame with the student being able to comprehend and articulate what they have read may (in some circumstances) be considered an archaic teaching method. As students spend more time on the Internet and obtain information from electronic resources, we must develop more ways to relay course content information to them via Internet because this is the way today's generation of college students obtain information.

O'Brien, Stewart and Beach (2008) reported that student use of technology is on the rise. They noted that the amount and breadth of reading that adolescents do outside school are substantial and much of it represents the reading of digital texts, including web pages and text messages. Additional research has found that students find the use of technology in the classroom to be a norm in how they receive information (Tucker & Coats, 2010). Young (2010) found that the use of technology in the classroom could offer instructors the opportunity to develop creative ways to manage classroom time.

As we begin to challenge ourselves to develop more creative ways to get students reading course material, we should recognize that smaller assignments might be more valuable to our students. Fewer pages of reading followed by quick reflection assignments may offer students the opportunity to give immediate feedback and reflective responses. Finding alternative types of reading assignments opposed to traditional textbook reading may also help to encourage students to read.

Conclusions

Future research should focus on developing alternative ways to encourage students to read. Developing discipline specific pedagogical techniques that are unique to the field of social science will prove valuable by providing guidance and direction to the field.

Future research should expand this study by examining the attitudes and practices toward reading of students enrolled in introductory social science courses. Larger samples and a more diverse population will allow for more generalizability of the findings. Also examining these questions within a multivariate analysis will allow for a more complete understanding of variables that effect students' attitudes and reading practices.

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Appendix

Reading Attitudes Survey

Directions: This is a test to tell how you feel about reading. The score will not affect your grade in any way. Read the statements and then put an X on the line under the letter or letters that represent how you feel about the statement.

SD - Strongly Disagree   D– Disagree   U - Undecided

A – Agree   SA - Strongly Agree

		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	You feel you have better things to do than read.	___	___	___	___	___
2.	You seldom buy a book.	___	___	___	___	___
3.	You are willing to tell people that you do not like to read.	___	___	___	___	___
4.	You have a lot of books in your room at home.	___	___	___	___	___
5.	You like to read a book whenever you have free time.	___	___	___	___	___
6.	You get really excited about books you have read.	___	___	___	___	___
7.	You love to read.	___	___	___	___	___
8.	You like to read books by well known authors.	___	__	__	___	___
9.	You never check out a book from the library.	___	___	___	___	___
10.	You like to stay at home and read.	___	___	___	___	___
11.	You seldom read except when you have to do a book report	___	___	___	___	___
12.	You think reading is a waste of time.	___	___	___	___	___
13.	You think reading is boring.	___	___	___	___	___
14.	You think people are strange when they read a lot.	___	___	___	___	___
15.	You like to read to escape from problems.	___	___	___	___	___
16.	You make fun of people who read a lot.	___	___	___	___	___
17.	You like to share books with your friends.	___	___	___	___	___
18.	You would rather someone just tell you information so that you won't have to read to get it.	___	___	___	___	___
19.	You hate reading.	___	___	___	___	___
20.	You generally check out a book when you go to the library.	___	___	___	___	___
21.	It takes you a long time to read a book.	___	___	___	___	___

		SD	D	U	A	SA
22.	You like to broaden your interests through reading.	___	___	___	___	___
23.	You read a lot.	___	___	___	___	___
24.	You like to improve your vocabulary so you can use more words.	___	___	___	___	___
25.	You like to get books for gifts.	___	___	___	___	___
26.	You read a book or magazine at least once a day.	___	___	___	___	___
27.	I prefer to get my information from the internet.	___	___	___	___	___
28.	I read for enjoyment at least one-hour a day.	___	___	___	___	___

The Effects of Kindles on Teachers' Reading Habits and Attitudes Toward Teaching
Reading

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Introduction

More than ever in our history, technology affects all aspects of life, especially in the area of

education.   Building upon years of research, scholars are paying increased attention to various

electronic devices for their application in teaching and learning (Fulton, 1997; Crader, 2003).

Students entering our classrooms today are the digital natives; they have grown up surrounded by

technology. However, many of the teachers of today's students are not digital natives. This pilot

study investigated the use of an Amazon Kindle (eReader) as part of graduate teachers'

practicum experience in an on-campus reading clinic. As a teacher educator in reading

education, I was interested in the application of Kindles to teacher education; however, there are

limited empirical studies on the effectiveness of Kindles. A related study by Clark, Goodwin,

Samuelson and Coker (2008) assessed the perceptions of 36 participants, which included library

staff and IT personnel, about the Kindle and its possible implications for library use. The results

from this study identified some of the best features of the Kindle, namely, ease of use, relatively

inexpensive cost for books, sample chapters free for download, availability of recommended

reading lists and quick download times. In addition to the best features, this study also cited

drawbacks of the Kindle, namely, cost, poor graphics, limited content issues and lack of

availability of some titles.

 Background

        Twenty-first century learners are digital natives who are quite at ease and highly

 motivated by technology, effectively use a variety digital devices to interact socially, and view

immersion in digital technology as the norm. Conversely, according to the Berkman Center (2008), a digital immigrant is one who began using technology later in life and may use a combination of digital and non-digital technologies to access information and communicate with others. Over the past few years, this researcher found that many of the in-service teachers enrolled in the graduate classes are examples of digital immigrants since many of them began using technology later in life.

Without a doubt, practicing teachers, especially teachers of reading, need to know and be able to use many new and emerging technologies. It is rare to read anything on teaching literacy without encountering a reference to using technology and incorporating technology in teaching. Technology has a place in pre-service and in-service teachers' emerging classroom pedagogy as well as in their professional development. Using technology and practicing with technology is one way to gain efficacy. Watts-Taffe, Gwinn, Johnson & Horn (2003) followed beginning teachers for a year as they attempted to incorporate technology into their teaching. These researchers found that teachers could integrate technology more easily as they practiced and gained confidence with it themselves. In addition, the teachers observed that their students displayed higher engagement and motivated by the use of technology.

Not only are practicing teachers encouraged to use technology in their teaching to motivate and engage their students-the digital natives (Leu, 2002), but higher education faculty are urged to integrate new kinds of technology into the curriculum. Hannon (2008) states: "Faculty should be encouraged to experiment with new devices in their courses…we have done this before with laptops, PDAs, iPods and response clickers, and we can do it now with new e-text readers." (p. 13). According to a report from the Democratic Leadership Council (2009), digital reading devices could serve as a useful tool for improving student learning.

Purpose

Interested in the newly introduced Kindle, an eBook reader, and its application in teacher education, this researcher received a faculty development grant from the university to conduct a study over one semester. At 10.3 ounces and about the size of a small book, the slim Kindle, is easy to hold and can download a title, for a nominal charge, in less than a minute. Although eBooks have been around for many years, the Kindle came onto the marketplace in November 2007 and according to Amazon, over 130,000 titles are available. The Kindle allows a user to download a book and read the beginnings of books free of charge before deciding to purchase. In addition, all newspapers start with a risk-free two-week trial.

The researcher purchased several Kindles to use in a graduate level reading education course, *Remediation of Reading Difficulties,* which is a required practicum/clinical course in the Master Degree in Reading program. All of the teachers enrolled are practicing teachers. The overall purpose of the study was to determine if the use of the Kindle with teachers had any effect on teachers' reading habits and on perceived attitudes toward teaching reading. This paper presents findings from a descriptive study on in-service teachers' reading habits and perceptions of teaching reading before and after using Kindles.

Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on Rosenblatt's (1938/ 1995) focus on the uniqueness of a particular, momentary transaction known as the "transactional theory" which proposes that the meaning of a text derives from a transaction between the text and reader within a specific context. Transactional theory of reader response explains that each reader breathes life into text through personal meaning making and individual experiences. The Kindle and other electronic book readers offer new opportunities and extended possibilities for personal engagement with

texts (Hancock 2009, Larson 2009, Gorrisen, 2009).

Engagement and motivation perspective also serves as the foundation for this study (Guthrie, et.al., 1997). The engagement perspective highlights the importance of motivation in learning to read and underscores the social basis of classroom learning. From this perspective, teachers should design classroom activities to motivate students and to provide many opportunities to become involved in written and oral language for meaningful purposes. Therefore, there is no reason that traditional theoretical frameworks of reading cannot apply to an eBook reading experience. The eBook readers are handheld devices designed to replicate the experience of reading a printed book.

Method

Participants

This study took place during the spring semester of 2009 and eleven in-service teachers enrolled in the M.Ed. program in reading education participated. These teachers were working toward becoming reading specialists. Ten of them were elementary classroom teachers and one was a middle-school language- arts teacher. The range in ages was considerable (29 to 55), and their years of teaching experience ranged from 3 to 30.

Instrument

The researcher developed a survey consisting of 10 statements, and administered it at the beginning of the semester and fifteen weeks later at the end of the semester. The researcher was interested in determining the teachers' perceptions about themselves as readers, their reading habits, and the degree to which their reading habits affect students they teach. The researcher piloted the survey with two graduate assistants to determine if the items were comprehensible to

the reader. The researcher also included an open-ended question on the post survey: *Describe how your reading habits changed while using the Kindle.*

The survey contained 10 items written as a statement. The participants were to rate the items using a five-point Likert Scale: (1) strongly disagree, (2) somewhat disagree, (3) undecided, (4) somewhat agree, and (5) strongly agree. Items 1 and 2 asked them to rate how much they enjoy reading and their views of themselves as a reader. Items 3 through 8 asked them to rate their reading habits-the genre they read, how often they read, and whether they read online. Items 9 and 10 asked them to rate what impact teachers' reading habits have on their students.

Data collection

During the first week of the semester, the researcher presented the Kindles to the teachers along with permission to use up to fifty dollars for books, newspapers, children's books etc. at Amazon.com. The researcher provided a demonstration on using the Kindle and told the teachers they could use the Kindle at home for recreational reading, or while working with their assigned student during reading clinic sessions and in their classroom at their school. During the course of the semester, the research also observed the reactions and interactions between the teachers and their clinic students. After the weekly session with their students, the teachers reflected on their lessons, and the researcher noted any comments about using the Kindle.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

At the conclusion of the fifteen–week semester, the participants responded to the same survey. The researcher sought to determine if there was a change in the teachers' reading habits and their attitudes about reading. Table 1 (below) contains the percentage of teachers' and the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the items on the pre and post survey.

Table 1

Pre and Post-Survey Results by Percentage of Respondents

	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Undecided		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Pos
1. I enjoy reading							28	17	72	83
2. I view myself as an avid reader			20				50	20	30	80
3. I read very often for pleasure (at least 1 book per week)	25		18	33	16	17	33	17	8	33
4. I read a variety of genre when I read for pleasure	1		9	17	9		27	33	54	50
5. I like to read informational material			9	17	18			33	73	50
6. I would read more if I had access to reading material electronically	45		37	17		16	18	50		17
7. I like to read newspapers online	27	9	33	37	17		18	33	9	17
8. I like to read books online	27		27	16	19	17	9	50	18	17
9. Students would read more if they see their teacher reading			18			1	18	33	64	66
10. I have to be an avid reader to be a good teacher of reading	18		19			33	36	34	27	33

n=11

After using the Kindles, 83% of the teachers strongly agreed that *they enjoyed reading* (Item 1), an increase from the pre-survey (72%). In response to item 2*,* 100% of the teachers somewhat agreed and strongly agreed that *they view themselves as an avid reader*, which was an increase from the pre-test (80%). When asked to rate item 3, *I read very often for pleasure (at*

least one book per week), 25% of the participants strongly disagreed at the onset of the study; whereas, at the end of the study 0% were in that category. Likewise, at the end of the study, 50% of the participants somewhat agreed and strongly agreed they were reading more often for pleasure.

Items 4, 5, 6, and 7 related to genre read. In response to item 4, *I read a variety of genre for pleasure,* 83% of the teachers somewhat agreed and strongly agreed that they read a variety of genre for pleasure which is similar to the 81% at the beginning on the study. When responding to item 5, *I like to read informational material*, 83% of the teachers rated it somewhat agree to strongly agree as compared to 73% at the onset of the study. Responses to Item 6, *I would read more if I had access to reading material electronically,* also showed an increase. At the onset of the study, 82% of the teachers strongly disagreed and somewhat disagreed with this; however, at the end of the study 87% of the teachers somewhat and strongly agreed that they would read more if they had access to material electronically. When asked to respond to Item 7, *I like to read newspapers on line, 27%* of the teachers strongly disagreed and the response changed to 0% at the conclusion of the study.

It appears that using the Kindle changed the teachers' perceptions about reading books on line. At the onset of the study *27%* somewhat agreed and strongly agreed that they like to read books on line; however, after using the Kindle 50% of the teachers' somewhat agreed and strongly agreed that they like to read books on line. Item 9, There was also a change in teachers' perceptions regarding Item 9, *Students would read more if they see their teacher reading.* Ninety-nine percent of the teachers somewhat agreed and strongly agreed with this as compared to 82 % on the pre-test. The results for Item 10, *I have to be an avid reader to be a good teacher of reading,* indicated a shift from the *strongly disagree (18%) and somewhat disagree (19%)*

ratings to the undecided rating (33%).

Table 2 includes some selected teacher responses to the open-ended question, *Describe How Your Reading Habits Changed After Using the Kindle*, which was included in the post-survey.

Table 2. Responses to the Open-Ended Question

> *I am not really a person that jumps to read, I read a lot of magazines, articles and books, if they are interesting to me, but the Kindle offered easy access for me.*
>
> *I really enjoyed using the Kindle, I found myself reading more because it was so easy to carry around and have easy access.*
>
> *I was amazed at using the Kindle. I loved how I could even listen to the material being read and follow along, I read every day, It is a unique device and I love how you can store books on it and not have to carry the books around.*
>
> *My clinic student really enjoyed reading with me. I found several children's books.*

Discussion

Although this study was limited to eleven participants over a fifteen-week period, the overall results suggest a change in the reading habits of the teachers and in their attitudes toward reading after using the Kindle. There was a favorable increase in the teachers' enjoyment of reading after using the Kindle, and the teachers viewed themselves more as an avid reader after having access to the Kindle. After using the Kindles, the teachers indicated they were reading more often for pleasure. The teachers reported that there was an opportunity to read more frequently because of access and the user-friendliness of the Kindle.

Interestingly, there was little change in the responses to the question; *I read a variety of genre for pleasure when I read.* Apparently, the teachers would read a variety of genre whether reading traditionally or reading using the Kindle, where reading material was immediately accessible. There was, however, a change in the teachers' perceptions of what would motivate

them to read more. More of the teachers agreed that they would read more by having material

available electronically. Having an electronic book reader apparently offers a unique alternative

to the traditional mode of reading, as it allows one to venture into a variety of genre at the reach

of a fingertip. More of the teachers agreed that they are beginning to enjoy having access to

newspapers online. This was a definite change from the onset of the study. With the Kindle, the

reader has available a variety of newspapers, not only the local paper. During the clinic, the

researcher observed the teachers using some newspaper articles with their assigned student

during their reading lessons.

The teachers also enjoyed reading books using the Kindle. Apparently, the use of

Kindles influenced their view of the importance of modeling reading for their students; even

discussions in class revealed that the teachers saw the effect their excitement and use of the

Kindle had on their clinic student. The teachers saw the benefits of using the Kindle during their

instruction with their student during the one-on-one instruction time; they were able to be a role

model for their student and model good reading behaviors during reading. The teachers also

changed their views on whether one has to be an avid reader to be a good teacher of reading. It

appeared that having easy access to reading material, and having the opportunity to read at

anywhere, anytime caused the participants to mull over and consider the possibility that they

needed to read more frequently to be a good teacher of reading.

A review of the teacher responses to the open-ended question, *Describe How Your*

Reading Habits Changed After Using the Kindle, suggests that the teachers, the digital

immigrants, found the e-reader an easy, enjoyable, and usable device that they could incorporate

into their everyday life and into their teaching. During the semester, the researcher observed that

the teachers would bring the Kindle to class and use it with their assigned clinic student. Some

downloaded children's books and were found sharing newspaper articles with their students. There was an apparent genuine interest from both the teachers and the students using the Kindle. At one of the sessions, during the semester, a teacher announced that she discovered one could access the internet with the Kindle and that the Kindle had a function to make notes, highlight, etc. using the keypad and even had audio capabilities. Obviously, this teacher explored many of the features, other than just reading material electronically; and this turned out to be a truly collaborative learning experience. Overall, the teachers displayed an excitement and eagerness to try out this "new" device, some even took it and used it at their school, sharing it with the faculty at their schools. They found it to be a "contagious" point of discussion at their school.

Educational Importance

With the revolution in the computer industry and the various platforms available for accessing digital material, the Kindle, as an eBook reader, offers a very useful option in any reading program. Teachers are not always able to compete with the pace and lure of new technologies, but teachers need to keep in mind that new technologies can be the medium for engaging students in the joy of learning. With the Kindle, there is no shortage of books therefore, engaged students can use this tool to enhance learning inside and outside of the classroom. Exploring the possibilities of eReaders and eBooks in schools is endless. Following this study and following the introduction of the Kindle, a number of eReaders are now on the market (i.e. Sony Reader, Hanlin eReader v3, CybookGen3, Ipad). Teachers, clinicians, and teacher trainers should consider the value of Kindles and other eBooks readers.

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