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# *East West Journal of Humanities Vol. 5, 2015*

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## Editorial

East West University, one of the leading universities in Bangladesh, fosters research and publication through East West University Center for Research and Training (EWUCRT). In adhering to the motto of the university ‘Excellence in Education’, *East West Journal of Humanities (EWJH)*, ISSN 2074-6628, strives to achieve excellence in academic scholarship by publishing scholarly peer-reviewed articles. Over the years, the reputation of this refereed journal has steadily increased. The overwhelming number of paper submission bears testament to the fact. For Volume 5 of *EWJH*, over 50 articles were submitted from 11 countries from all over the world, namely, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Japan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. After a rigorous vetting and peer-review process, only eight were accepted for publication. In this issue, topics of accepted publications range from linguistics, literature, online education, to film and media studies.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of EWUCRT for its relentless support towards academic training, research and publication which has paved the way to achieve a sustainable research-oriented environment at East West University. The publication of *East West Journal of Humanities*, Volume 5, was partially funded by UGC/World Bank HEQEP sub-project: Knowledge Transfer and Capacity Development of Academic Staff.

**MUHAMMED SHAHRIAR HAQUE, Ph.D.**

Editor

East West Journal of Humanities (EWJH)

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# Creative Writing in English and EFL Students: Finding Motivation in Self-expression

*Patrick Dougherty*  
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## Abstract

This article details an investigation of the application of creative writing to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at two universities, one in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the other in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It asks three questions: (1) do EFL students perceive creative writing in English as motivational in their English studies, (2) does creative writing in English encourage EFL students to write in English outside of the classroom, and (3) does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English? The answers to these questions have universal applications to other English programs, in other settings, in other countries. The study outlined in this article will demonstrate that introducing creative writing to EFL programs can serve as a powerful motivational force in the classroom, benefiting the students academically, emotionally, and linguistically.

## Introduction

The researcher began his teaching career in the late 1980s as a high school English and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in the United States. At that time he would not have associated the teaching of creative writing with the part of his assignment that had him working with ESL students. He thought, at the time, that creative writing was the domain of the native speaker of the language in which the writing will be done. Yet, even in his content teaching of English literature and composition he encountered examples, such as the writers Joseph Conrad and Chinua Achebe, who showed that significant pieces of literature have been written by writers using their second language as the medium of expression (Gioia and Gwynn, 2006). From that time, the researcher has changed his view of creative writing and those who might be helped to better their linguistic skills by using it in the classroom.

This study examines the use of creative writing with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at two universities, one in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the other in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates. The study asks three questions: (1) do EFL students perceive creative writing in English as motivational in their English studies, (2) does creative writing in English encourage EFL students to write in English outside of the classroom, and (3) does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English?

## Rationale

Discussion of second language learner (L2) motivation has some pedigree, and can be traced back to, among others, the Canadian social psychologists Lambert and Gardner (Gardner, 2009). In 1959, they initiated an exploration into the issues surrounding L2 learner motivation, using a social and psychological approach. They found that learning another language is dissimilar from any other educational objective in that it necessitates that the individual accepts elements of an alien culture into the context of his or her life (Gardner, 2009).

Keller (1983) as cited in Dornyei, (2001b, p. 116) went so far as to argue that motivation should be at the center of the education dynamic; yet, it was often neglected in academic discourse. This is in agreement with Dornyei (2001a):

Teachers are supposed to teach the curriculum rather than motivate learners, and the fact that the former cannot happen without the latter is often ignored. For example, I am not aware of a single L2 teacher-training program worldwide in which the development of skills in motivating learners would be a key component of the curriculum. (p. 27)

How do we encourage motivation, or enhance it if it is already in existence, or maintain it if it is waning? Noels (2001, p. 54) identified three psychological needs that must be accommodated to activate motivation:

- a. The subject must acquire a sense of competency by surmounting challenges in the attainment of a goal.
- b. The subject should be autonomous in pursuit of a goal.
- c. The subject must have a sense of relatedness.

The term “relatedness” Noels (2001) explained, is a state where the subject feels “. . . connected to, and esteemed, by others belonging to a larger social whole (p. 54).”

How does this apply to L2 learning? According to Lo and Hyland (2007), one method of increasing students’ motivation is to redevelop L2 writing classes. The courses should be redesigned in two ways: (1) to ensure that activities are relevant to the students’ lives, what Lo and Hyland (2007) related as being their “social and cultural context,” and (2), the courses should allow opportunities for “social interaction and self-expression (p. 221).” In the context of this research, in both the study conducted in the UAE and the recent study conducted in Bangladesh, students were encouraged to delve into their social and cultural contexts for raw materials for their creative writing. The essence of the course in Bangladesh was creative writing, and an important component of the courses in the UAE study was a set of creative writing assignments.

The researcher believes that the use of creative writing can allow the student to take the L2 and use it for his or her own purposes; i.e., to share his or her artistic and personal vision in the target language. In essence, creative writing will allow the student to make the language his or her own possession.

## The Study

There were two parts to this study, one was an investigation into creative writing and EFL student motivation conducted in the UAE in 2009. The other element of the study was an enquiry into the same set of questions but done in Bangladesh in 2014. A portion of the findings from the original UAE study have been published as a chapter in a refereed, edited book (Dougherty, 2010) by the present researcher, and it will be cited as such when necessary. However, the researcher revisited the primary sources from the 2009 study, reviewing the survey data for new insights and new perspectives for this current investigation.

Results from the two components were compared in relation to the research questions. This allowed the researcher to answer his research questions from a more expansive vantage point, taking in different types of subjects, from different contexts of instruction, different cultural settings and first languages, and making a comparison of findings. What was a narrow study in the setting of the 2009 research has been greatly expanded. The data is greater in quantity and deeper in focus.

What follows is a précis of the study. It covers the contexts, background on the research subjects, offers a discussion of the courses and how creative writing was taught or integrated into them, and finally, outlines the data collection methods used in both the UAE and in Bangladesh.

## The Contexts

The study in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was conducted at a public university in Abu Dhabi in 2009. The research subjects were enrolled in the Higher Diploma Foundations English program. The Higher Diploma Foundations English program was established for students studying for entry into Bachelor of Science programs. Those programs required an IELTS band of 5.0 or a TOEFL PBT score of 433 or an iBT score of 40 (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2014). The Higher Diploma Foundations English program was established for college applicants, “. . . who meet the general admissions requirements but do not meet the program placement criteria for Bachelor of Applied Science programs [and are therefore] enrolled into Foundations Studies programs which will assist students to meet the entry requirements for the Bachelor of Applied Science” (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2014, para. 10).

In Bangladesh, the researcher taught an intensive course in Creative Writing in English to EFL students at a private university in Dhaka, in September, 2014. The purpose was to confirm the findings of an earlier study; that creative writing in English can serve as a motivational force for EFL students. This was the fourth such course the researcher had taught at the same private university in Dhaka. However, the earlier courses, taught annually from 2006 – 2008, had eighteen class meetings spread over a five week term of study. Each class met for two and one half hours, three times per week (Dougherty & Dougherty, 2008). In this instance, in the 2014 class, due to the researcher’s time constraints the course was taught as an intensive program that met over a two week period.

## The UAE Study

In the UAE study, there were fifteen participants. They were self-selected, as the survey they took was voluntary. They were all male. Most were in their first year of post-secondary education. They were from three separate classes taught at the same college. They were offered the opportunity to take the survey at the end of their course of studies with the researcher. Each class had between fifteen and twenty students. Two of the three classes were company or government sponsored, meaning that the students were receiving scholarships from the company or the government in exchange for agreeing to work for the sponsor for a set number of years after graduation. When asked what their major area of study was at the college, almost half of the respondents listed some form of engineering. The rest of the subjects that responded to the question listed some form of science focus for their studies. The students were taught English writing by the researcher conducting this current study. They were all in the Higher Diploma Foundations course and were studying English for approximately fifteen contact hours per week for twenty weeks.

Education in the public primary and secondary schools of the UAE is conducted in Arabic. Education in the public universities is conducted in English, save for some specific, religion focused, courses of study. However, some Emirati families send their children to private English medium primary or secondary schools. In the case of the fifteen UAE subjects, six attended Arabic medium primary and secondary schools, three attended English medium primary and secondary schools, five attended Arabic medium elementary schools and switched to English medium high schools, and one attended an English medium primary school and then switched to an Arabic medium high school. Regarding their English ability, they were asked to identify what they perceived was their level for spoken and written English. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*UAE subjects' ranking of their spoken and written English*

UAE subjects ranked their Spoken English [15 subjects]			
Excellent	Good	Average	Basic
20% (3 respondents)	47% (7 respondents)	20% (3 respondents)	13% (2 respondents)
UAE subjects ranked their Written English [15 subjects]			
Excellent	Good	Average	Basic
13% (2 respondents)	40% (6 respondents)	47% (7 respondents)	0%

### THE BANGLADESH STUDY

There were eighteen students in the course in Bangladesh. There were five men and thirteen women. The majority of them were traditional university students, aged in their early twenties, but there were also five older students who were in their 30s, 50s, and 60s. One of the older students one was a high school English teacher, one was a staff member at the university, and another was a retired educator. The other two had returned to university to complete their degrees.

In Bangladesh, students may study in English language elementary and secondary schools or in Bangla elementary or secondary schools. Eight of the students completed both their elementary and secondary educations in Bangla medium schools, six completed their pre-tertiary educations in English medium schools, and four studied in English medium elementary schools and then switched to Bangla medium high schools.

The eighteen Bangladesh respondents were asked to rate their English ability. Their responses are shown below in Table 2:

Table 2

*Bangladesh subjects' ranking of their spoken and written English*

Bangladesh subjects ranked their Spoken English [18 subjects]		
Excellent or good	Average or basic	Poor
56% (10 respondents)	39% (7 respondents)	5% (1 respondents)
Bangladesh subjects ranked their Written English [18 subjects]		
Excellent or good	Average or basic	Poor
61% (11 respondents)	39% (7 respondents)	0%

As membership in the creative writing course was optional, students lacking confidence in their writing ability might not have been willing to join; hence the confidence level for writing tended to be high for the participants.

In the UAE study, the students took fifteen hours of English class time per week. The contact hours were divided between the skill areas of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The researcher taught the writing component. A variety of course materials were used. Students had laptops and access to the Internet, they were provided with level appropriate textbooks, and their classes were further enhanced by teacher generated materials that included creative writing lessons and assignments.

Creative writing was introduced to the students via both special assignments and additions to regular course offerings. Each of the three courses from which the research subjects were

generated received the same creative writing instruction, and completed the same set of creative writing assignments.

The researcher conducted several creative writing based lessons throughout the term with each of the surveyed classes. The first creative writing assignment was also the opening assignment of the class. It is offered here as an example of the type of activities completed by the students. Called a “Three-Staged Introduction,” the assignment was an activity where the students worked individually and with a partner. It was designed as an ice-breaker and to give the students a chance to introduce themselves and get to know another student in the class. The assignment asked the student to create (1) an acrostic poem using their name as the starting point, (2) respond to three reflective questions, (3) exchange papers with a student and then respond to three prompts for descriptions of the student. Examples of student responses to some of the sections are shown below in Figure 1:

**Stage 1: The Acrostic Poem**

- M – *Manly and into sports*
- A – *Able to do many things at once*
- R – *Relieved to get into college*
- W – *Waleed is my best friend for all time*
- A – *Argumentative about sports teams*
- N – *Nervous about examinations*

**Stage 2: Reflective Questions**

1. If you could be an animal, what animal would you be?  
Answer: *A falcon*
2. If you could be a color, what color would you be?  
Answer: *Blue*
3. If you could be a child’s toy, what toy would you be?  
Answer: *A toy airplane*

**Stage 3: Descriptions**

1. How would a blind person describe this individual?  
*He talks loudly and too quickly. He snores in class. He has a loud car.*
2. How would a deaf person describe this individual?  
*He is skinny and doesn’t eat anything. He always wears sunglasses. He likes baseball caps.*
3. How would a three year old child describe this individual?  
*He is scary because I cannot see his eyes. He never gives me candy. Maybe he is nice, maybe he is not. I want my mom.*

Figure 1. The Three-Staged Introduction Assignment used in the UAE study (Dougherty, 2010, p. 45)

Furthermore, and with the intention of helping to motivate students, the researcher held a series of Poetry Slam festivals at the university. A Poetry Slam is a poetry competition where poets share their work with other poets and interested audience members. Though a competition, the Abu Dhabi event was organized to offer students the opportunity to read their poems aloud in front of teachers and peers rather than as a competitive occasion. Nonetheless, awards were given for Best Dressed Poet, Most Imagery in a Poem, Funniest Poem, Best Delivery, Most Eye Contact with the Audience, and the Best of Show. Additionally, all those who read poems were invited to submit their work for inclusion in an anthology: *The Sundial Poets: The collected works of the*

1<sup>st</sup> ADMC Poetry Slam. Twenty-three students submitted work to the anthology. There was a book launch for the anthology. The students were able to autograph each other's copy of the anthology and have pictures taken.

One teacher who encouraged her students to participate in the first Poetry Slam reflected on her experience in using some of the researcher's creative writing lessons to help prepare her students, who were taking the same level of English Foundations courses as the researcher was teaching at the time. She reflected on her students' initial reactions to writing poetry and how she overcame their hesitancy:

Students: 'Write a poem in English?'

Student A: I can't do this even in Arabic, no, not me, no, teacher...please!

Student B: A poem about what?

Student C: Will it be on the progress test?

Teacher: O.K. Watch...this is one way to do it.....

Bit by bit a simple beach, or car were transformed by 'juicy pineapples dripping ...thick exhaust blackening'. Then the re-writes ventured more exotically into daring metaphor and descriptive vocabulary and images. 'My Pepsi beats my thirst.' Sandcastle forts shooting arrows; 'A student snoring, drilling dreams into his desk.' Each succeeding poem improved upon itself and pride and accomplishment were expressed. Fancy and creativity emerged, smiles widened, but the voluntary contributions and the addition of students' own but unsolicited artwork proved there had been a "Click!" (M. Berguin, personal communication, February 26, 2010)

The Bangladesh course met 13 times, for three hours per class meeting, from September 13<sup>th</sup> – September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014, with two days off for religious observances on Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, and Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. This allowed the course, officially titled by the registrar's office as LIT 353.1 (Creative Writing), to be granted a three credit hour full course status, as the institutional requirement for that designation was a thirty-nine contact hour schedule.

The students were informed of the research objectives of the researcher and also given an overview of the pedagogical purpose of the course, its pedigree at the institution, and given an outline of the specific course goals. The syllabus for the course can be found in Appendix A.

For this short course the researcher focused on three genres: memoir, poetry, and short story. Production was encouraged at each class meeting, and students brought in their work for peer review and assistance. Examples of the genres were obtained from stories and poems written in English by Bengali storytellers and poets. Students were required to complete a short memoir piece, a poem, and the outline of a short story to be submitted by December 31, 2014. Additionally, there were two writing journal entries, a mid-course quiz and a final examination. As most of the students had never taken a creative writing course before, much attention was given to the writing process and the elemental structures of short stories and poetry. As an artifact of the course, and to help motivate the students, the researcher announced to the class members that he would collect student stories and poems in a publishable format.

## Data Collection

In the case of the UAE study, the data was collected via an English language Internet survey given to three classes of students during the 2009 academic year. The survey was voluntary, and a total of fifteen subjects out of a potential of approximately forty-five students self-selected to respond. Respondents were expected to answer the questions in English. The survey was

introduced to the students during the final week of classes for their term of studies in the researcher's English class. They were then sent the link to the on-line survey and instructed that, if they chose to complete the survey, they had a two week window of time to do so before the link would be closed.

In Bangladesh, on the final day of class, after the class finished, students were invited to complete a forty-one question survey. They were instructed that the survey was anonymous. The survey was in English and subjects were expected to answer all questions in English. There was a mix of yes/no and multiple choice responses, as well as ranking questions and thirteen free response questions. Due to a lack of computer access, the survey was paper-based. Though voluntary, all eighteen of the students stayed and completed the survey. The researcher left the room in which the subjects were completing the survey and the completed surveys were collected by a volunteer graduate student.

The survey questions in both cases also included questions aimed at specific course improvement and specific institutional contexts. There were, between the two survey tools, twenty identical questions geared at ascertaining how the course had impacted students' motivation and their sense of self improvement in key skill areas. There were five additional free response questions added to the Bangladesh survey to elicit more specific information about the impact of the course on student motivation to study English and improve their English language abilities. These questions were added in light of perceived needs for deeper questioning after the researcher's experience with the 2009 study. The twenty questions, and the five additional questions for the Bangladesh survey, are shown in Appendix B.

## Findings

The findings are categorized by the research questions. The research questions are: (1) do students perceive creative writing in English as motivational in their English studies, (2) does creative writing in English encourage students to write in English beyond the classroom, and (3) does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English? For the discussion of free response questions, the research subjects from the UAE have been designated as Subjects A – O and the subjects from Bangladesh have been designated as Subjects I – XVIII. The subjects in the UAE part of the study were all male. The subjects in the Bangladesh part of the study were of both genders.

Question 1: Do students perceive creative writing in English as motivational in their English studies?

In the UAE survey, a question asked if students found creative writing to be a motivational experience. Of the fourteen subjects who responded to the question, 71%, or ten of the fourteen, responded in the affirmative. In the case of the Bangladesh respondents, 100%, or all eighteen, affirmed that the creative writing course was motivational for them. Additionally, one question in the Bangladesh survey asked the respondents to scale how much the course motivated them in their English studies. On a scale of 1 – 4 with 1 being not at all and 4 being very much, twelve of the eighteen Bangladesh subjects scaled their motivation at 4 and six gave a rank of 3 to their sense of motivation.

In answers offered to a free response question asking the UAE respondents about the benefits of having creative writing as part of their English course, Subject A said simply, "It helps us to improve our English." Subject D added that it, "Improved the skills," and Subject F stated, enigmatically, "It helps you in your life." Subject G felt that one benefit of having creative writing as part of an English course was that it helped to "...improve your thinking."

The Bangladesh respondents, when asked if the course was motivational for them and in what sphere of their lives, had myriad answers. Of the seventeen subjects who responded to the prompt, all stated, in one manner or another that the course was motivational. Some examples of answers were, from Subject XII, "This class was very motivational for me not only for my academic career but also for my private career . . . through this class I have learned how to write and how to speak." Subject XI responded, "I learned to write creatively, what I never did before. . . I felt enthusiastic to write about stories and different personalities." Finally, we have the reply of Subject IV, "Undoubtedly! In every sphere of life . . . my writing instinct will never give a pause now!"

When asked if the experience of writing creatively would encourage them to read more English language literature, 67%, or twelve of the eighteen Bangladesh subjects, responded that it did encourage them and that they would read more literature. When asked if the course had encouraged them to read more English language literature, 100% of the Bangladesh subjects responded affirmatively.

The responses of the subjects in the UAE study affirm that the respondents perceived creative writing as being motivational in their English studies. They also indicated that they felt that having creative writing as part of their English course benefited them in both academic and social spheres. This pattern of thought was maintained in the responses of the Bangladesh study participants. They overwhelmingly affirmed that creative writing was motivational. They felt that it benefited them academically and in other parts of their lives.

Question 2: Does creative writing in English encourage students to write in English beyond the classroom?

In the case of the UAE study, 93%, or fourteen of the fifteen respondents, answered that they would continue to write in English. Furthermore, 100% of the UAE respondents felt that creative writing had helped to improve their written English. Asked if they would share their creative work with others, 61%, or nine, stated in the affirmative. When asked how they would go about sharing their creative writing, some spoke of sharing their work with friends. Subject B explained, "We will do it as a group . . . and we can share." When asked what activities in the class were the most helpful in making this improvement, Subject A discussed the different types of "formats" that were introduced and that helped to improve his writing and vocabulary. Subject H stated that the process of writing something every day was beneficial. Subjects K and N felt that one activity, where the instructor showed video clips from a series of movies and then had the students write a paragraph from the perspective of one of the characters was useful in encouraging them to write.

Responding to a question asking if, after taking the course, the students felt more motivated to write in English, all of the Bangladesh participants, 100%, stated that yes, they were more motivated to write in English. Regarding how often they would try to write, 67%, or twelve out of the eighteen, indicated that they would do so weekly or even daily. The rest stated that they would write creatively at least monthly.

The Bangladesh subjects were given a selection of ways in which they might share their creative writing, and we told that they could select more than one possible outlet. Most of the respondents, sixteen of the eighteen, selected making newspaper or writer's magazine or journal submissions. Public readings were of interest to eight of the subjects, and six of the subjects indicated that they might publish their own books and/or magazines. The "Other" category received votes from three of the respondents. To fathom what the "Other" category might be, a free response question was also included in the questionnaire. When asked how they would share

their creative writing with other people, Subjects I, III, VI, X, XII, XIV, XV, XVI, and XVIII all indicated that one method they would use to publish their creative work was the Internet, through blogs and personal websites.

The results of the UAE study reveal that the participants perceived that creative writing in English encourages students to write in English beyond the classroom. A majority of the subjects stated that they would continue to write in English and a majority indicated that they would share their work with their peers and the community. These findings were the same for the Bangladesh study, but with a heavier weight of respondents indicating that they would both continue to write in English and share their creative work with their peers and the community.

Question 3: Does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English?

One question from the UAE study asked respondents to offer an opinion about whether creative writing motivates someone to become a better user of English. In response, Subject A explained that it was motivating in the sense it offered the chance to “explore more words and formats . . .”. Subject G stated, “Yes, because it’s helping them to improve their English and also it lets them think in a wider way.” Subject O offered that it gave him more “confidence in (himself).” Of the ten subjects who responded to the question, 80% made positive remarks, with the exceptions being Subject L who stated that he did not know, and Subject B saying that he felt he was not ready for creative writing.

In a series of questions in the UAE survey, the fifteen subjects were asked if creative writing had improved their abilities in the key areas of English language writing, reading, vocabulary acquisition, and public speaking. Regarding public speaking, as the normal procedure in the class was for students to verbally share their creative work with classmates, this encouraged them to work on such issues as eye contact, pronunciation, tone, and pacing. This was complimented by the preparation for, and participation in, the Poetry Slam. The results are shown in Table 3:

**Table 3**

*Fifteen UAE subjects’ self-identified improvement in key English skill areas*

Improved English Writing		Improved English Reading Comprehension		Improved English Language Vocabulary		Improved skills in public speaking	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
100%	0%	100%	0%	93% (14)	7% (1)	87% (13)	13% (2)

When asked if they would recommend creative writing to other students to help them improve their English, 93%, or fourteen of the fifteen respondents, answered that they would recommend it to their peers. Finally, twelve of the fifteen respondents in the UAE study felt that creative writing should be offered as part of a normal university education.

In the case of the Bangladesh research subjects, when survey questions focused on individual language skills, as in the case of the UAE, the responses emphasized the benefits that accrued due to creative writing. As far as a sense of improvement in their English skills, a quartet of the questions from the survey asked them to decide on whether they had improved key English skills and comprehension levels. They were asked whether their writing skills, their reading comprehension, and their public speaking (frequent recitations of their stories and poems were class requirements) had improved. Additionally, another question asked them whether they had improved their English language vocabulary. The results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4

*Eighteen Bangladesh subjects' self-identified improvement in key English skill areas*

Improved English Writing		Improved English Reading Comprehension		Improved English Language Vocabulary		Improved skills in public speaking	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
100%	0%	78% (14)	22% (8)	100%	0%	89% (16)	11% (2)

When asked if they felt that the course encouraged them to improve their English, 93%, or all but one of the eighteen respondents, agreed.

When queried if they would recommend creative writing to their peers, 100% of the eighteen Bangladesh respondents said that they would recommend the course. Furthermore, all but one of the eighteen respondents felt that creative writing should be part of a normal university education. When asked in a free response question whether creative writing would benefit someone outside of the English major in university, 100% of the respondents agreed. Subject II felt that it could benefit those outside of the English major by encouraging them to “. . . write imaginatively in English.” Subject IV felt that “. . . one can't help learn at least something (even if outside the English major) or develop at least a bit of any of the four skills in language.” Subject XI felt that creative writing “. . . inspires people to write on anything, raising our intrinsic motivation.”

When asked what they saw as the benefits of taking a creative writing class, Subject IV deemed that the course, “. . . helps to develop all four skills of language.” This was echoed by Subject V who felt that it “Enriched my reading, writing, and listening,” and by Subject VIII who concluded that it had allowed for the development of “Fluency in speaking, listening, and free writing.” Subject XIV was of the opinion that the course provided people who were “interested to write” a “fantastic way to explore [his or her] skills and push [his or her] boundaries to become a better writer.” Subject XV felt that the course had “enriched” her in speaking and writing skills and felt “motivated forward for creative writing.”

Regarding the second research question it was concluded in the UAE study and affirmed in the Bangladesh study that creative writing in English does motivate EFL students to be better users of English. The subjects stated so directly and indicated this via their assessments of their English language skill improvements and vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, in both the UAE and Bangladesh, the subjects indicated that they would recommend creative writing to their peers to help improve their English. Furthermore, in both studies the respondents indicated a majority opinion that creative writing should be part of a normal university curriculum. In the case of the Bangladesh study, the respondents overwhelmingly felt that such an inclusion would even be of benefit to those outside of the English major as well as within the English major.

## Conclusion

This study has shown that those in the EFL context would benefit from being introduced to creative writing as part of their overall English language curriculum. The researcher believes that creative writing has many positive benefits for the EFL student. The research data gave clear answers.

To reiterate, there were three research questions asked in this case study: (1) do EFL students perceive creative writing in English as motivational in their English studies, (2) does creative writing in English encourage students to write in English outside of the classroom, and (3) does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English? Each

question may be answered in the affirmative, supported by the data from both sets of subjects in this study, from both the UAE and from Bangladesh.

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, the answers to these questions are important for their universal applicability to EFL studies. Non-native speakers of English, from two separate countries, language groups, and histories and cultures have identified creative writing as beneficial to their language acquisition. Under these circumstances it would behoove administrators and teachers in EFL programs to include creative writing courses, or elements of creative writing at the least, in their curricula. As explained in the opening of this chapter, introducing creative writing to EFL programs can serve as a powerful motivational force in the classroom, benefiting the students academically, emotionally, and linguistically.

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## Appendix A

The Syllabus for the Creative Writing Course in Bangladesh

### **Creative Writing in English**

A special course for Bangladesh

Instructor: Dr. Patrick T. Dougherty

*The desire to write grows with writing.*

-Erasmus

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Creative Writing in English will provide an opportunity for students to hone their creative writing skills as well as provide a student-centered environment for English language immersion. Students will explore and develop their own ideas through the medium of creative writing. Students will read, write, and share their creative endeavors and providing constructive advice to their peers. The participants in the course will become a small community of writers, eager to compose, share, read, hear, and support.

### **COURSE GOALS**

Students will learn and practice skills that help them craft unique and thoughtful work in English. They will sharpen their critical reading skills through reading, discussion, and writing assignments and will learn the conventions of critique and collaboration. They will maintain a portfolio of revised work and they will submit selected pieces of their creative work to a course literary book.

### **SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES FOR THE STUDENTS**

Students will:

1. Write creatively and expressively in English
2. Use the appropriate vocabulary for critique
3. Use appropriate literary devices
4. Define the unique characteristics of poetry, fiction, plays, and nonfiction
5. Experiment with a variety of genres
6. Use appropriate pre-writing strategies
7. Develop ideas into draft form
8. Proofread, edit, and revise
9. Present as individuals, in pairs, and small groups
10. Give critiques in a constructive and respectful manner

### **SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES FOR THE INSTRUCTOR**

To have students grow in confidence in their own ability to be creative, insightful, understanding, and helpful in an English language medium.

To collect enough brilliant examples of student creative work to make a course literary booklet to serve as a permanent reminder for the students of the experience of taking the course and to exhibit their talent to the wider community.

### **COURSE ORGANIZATION**

Study and writing will be organized around the following genres:

1. Memoir
2. Poetry
3. Short story

A range of activities will be included under each of these genres. However, in all settings serious attention will be given to the stages of the writing process: drafting, revising, editing, and presentation. Students will be expected to keep a reading/writing journal.

## CONTENT OF THE COURSE

Creative endeavors flow from the student's knowledge and experience; therefore the course will not simply focus on technique, but will include the following two components:

- a. Production: exploration, development, and expression of ideas through writing and the importance of reflection in this process.
- b. Critique: reflecting on their own writing, responding critically to published writing as well as their peers' writing; participation in the interactive process between writer and audience.

## TEXTS

Select examples of genre writings and creations will be provided in Xeroxed format for the students.

## EVALUATION

Grades will be determined by a point system. Grades will be given for assignments done either in or outside of class. Aspects of grading will incorporate the mandated systems of the host institution(s). This might include a midterm examination and a final examination. As projected, students should expect to produce and be graded on these creative items (some of which will be completed individually and others as a team):

- A memoir sketch
- A 20 line (minimum) poem or set of poems
- One short story outline

And also these items:

- Two Writing Journal entries
- Participation in class activities
- A mid-course quiz
- A final examination

## DAILY AGENDA

A day-to-day agenda of activities will be created for the course after finalization of the time, dates, and student number for the course is made. This will be provided to the participating students on the first day of the course, or very soon thereafter.

## Appendix B

Joint Questions from the Bangladesh and UAE surveys with relevant questions added to the Bangladesh survey

1. Has Creative Writing helped to improve your English language writing?
2. Has Creative Writing improved your English language reading comprehension?
3. Has Creative Writing helped to improve your English language vocabulary?
4. Has Creative Writing helped improve your skills in public speaking?
5. Regarding language, which type of a school did you attend in elementary (primary) school?

6. Regarding language, which type of a school did you attend in secondary school?
7. Would you recommend this course (Creative Writing) to others?
8. Did you find Creative Writing to be a motivational experience for you?
9. Do you think Creative Writing should be offered as part of a normal university education?
10. How would you rate your spoken English?
11. How would you rate your written English?
12. Did peer editing help you to improve your own writing?
13. As a result of the class will you read more English language literature?
14. As a result of the class will you read more English language literature?
15. Has the course improved your understanding of literature?
16. Rate the quality of the Creative Writing class on a scale of 1 - 5 with 1 being "excellent" and 5 being "poor."
17. Which activities in the class were the most important in respect to improving your writing skills?
18. What do you see as the benefits of taking a Creative Writing course?
19. In your opinion, does taking a creative writing course benefit those outside the English major? If so, how?
20. After taking this course you can offer a justified opinion on this question: Does creative writing motivate someone to become a better "user" of English? Yes, no, and why?

Relevant questions added to the Bangladesh survey:

21. Was this class motivational for you? If so, in what areas of your life, academic or private, and in what ways?
22. Has the course encouraged you to read more literature?
23. After taking the course are you now more motivated to write in English?
24. Did the course encourage you to improve your English?
25. On a scale of 1 - 4 with 1 being not at all and 4 being very much, how much or how little did the course motivate you in your study of English?

## Representing the Unrepresentable in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*

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### Abstract

This article looks closely at Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* from the critical perspective of trauma studies with a particular focus on the representational crisis posed by individual and collective catastrophic events. It positions the novel within the category of partition fiction so as to enable a contextual reading—one that takes the literary-historical milieu as well as the evolution of the genre into consideration. Such positioning makes comparison and cross-referencing between texts possible. Any traumatic event causes a mnemonic gap in the individual victim's consciousness and a politically motivated suppression of memory on the level of the collective. This problematizes its representation in the realistic mode, and partition novelists, especially from the 1980s and onwards, have resorted to indirect means to represent this massive disruption of social cohesion in the subcontinental history. Anita Desai, for example, uses the motifs of sibling rivalry and fragility of social relationships to imply the antagonism between India and Pakistan as well as Hindus and Muslims. *Clear Light of Day* gives its audience a localized view of history in the sense that it illustrates the profound consequences of the Partition on the members of the Das family. This article has attempted to explore how this localized view through indirect means of representation may yield insights into the intersecting points of public and private traumas and their recovery.

Keywords: Trauma Studies, partition fiction, indirect representation

In the 90s of the previous century, Yale University witnessed a boom of research and archival projects dealing with humankind's encounter with massive catastrophes—man-made and environmental, individual and collective—by theorists such as Geoffrey Hartman, Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman. This resulted in the emergence of trauma theory, which draws heavily on Freudian psychoanalysis and the insights of Holocaust studies. Among the many consequences of trauma, particularly highlighted were the cognitive and linguistic breakdowns. To put it more simply, any massive traumatic event like the Partition of British India or 9/11 is so overwhelming that it eludes human understanding as well as linguistic rendition. This has significant consequences to fictional representation of atrocity as trauma inherently resists representation. In addition, a detailed and 'faithful' description of violence runs the risk of becoming a prurient spectacle, often evident in the treatment of rapes in South Asian movies—a tendency summed up by anthropologist E. Valentine Daniel (1996): "Accounts of violence . . . are vulnerable to taking on a prurient form" (p. 4). It is of crucial significance, therefore, to discover the means by which description of violence arouses empathy rather than interest.

The challenge for an oral historian or a fiction writer consists in the mode of representation that may unwittingly slip into pornographic depiction of traumatic events. However, there is a basic difference between an oral testimony of trauma and its fictive rendition. Bearing witness to atrocity involves transformation of the mnemonic fracture of trauma into narrative memory and its complex narrativization in language, a medium inadequate for conveying the horror of overwhelming limit experiences. Bearing witness, therefore, goes through at least two levels of distortion: firstly, the gap in memory trauma leaves needs to be filled in with a surrogate conception of the event; and secondly, when the surrogate invention is expressed in language, it being an elaborate social system of code as a communicative medium, the traumatic event is

translated and codified in terms of the socially validated reality. Therefore, oral narratives of trauma tend to be tainted with some degree of distortion. This poses a crucial challenge to attempts of legal resolution of atrocities or efforts of documentation of trauma in the form of oral histories. Recent enthusiasm in archiving traumatic histories takes these facts into account, so that users of the archives can be made aware of their limitations.

Literary representations of trauma, especially in fictions, have been considered rather successful in depicting, interpreting and analyzing limit experiences than official, traditional or subaltern historiography. Tarun K. Saint (2010) calls fictional representations of the Partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 'fictive testimony' (p. 47) while the term Priya Kumar (1999) uses is 'testimonial fiction' (p. 201). Fiction bears witness to partition trauma in that the medium has the resources to portray real characters in real situations and the way a massive socio-political upheaval affects the society as a collective entity as well as individuals living within it. Unlike any other linguistic exercise, literature, especially fiction, is able to accommodate mnemonic, cognitive and linguistic breakdowns. This often enables fiction to represent events and their mnemonic and linguistic repercussions as fragmentary. The fractures fiction can contain parallels the fractures in the traumatized psyche, thereby communicating a sense of how it is to encounter a bewilderingly violent event.

Again, unlike journalistic writings or academic histories, the individual does not get reduced to a tiny part of the statistical data about the murdered or the dislocated in fiction. Fictional representation, therefore, allows to display the human dimension of massive traumatic events without running the risk of presenting a faceless mass. The referentiality of fiction to the real event is obviously indirect because even though fiction might draw on real events, it does not have the obligation to correspond to the objective truth. It is referential to the extent that it can produce a reality that might well be the reality of the event being represented.

A scholarly reading of fictions written on the Partition of British India may reveal novel dimensions if the insights of trauma studies into the conflicting demands of an ethical representation of catastrophe are taken into account. Ever since Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* came out in 1956, the Partition has been one of the major preoccupations of South Asian novelists although this enthusiasm reached its peak not until the 1980s. In the literary history of Indian (or South Asian) English literature, the 1980s marks a crucial bend, which suddenly brought it to the mainstream of world literatures in English with the publication of Salman Rushdie's Booker winning novel *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie's novel incidentally also falls into the category of partition fiction. Indeed, most partition fiction writers wrote some of their most celebrated works in the 1980s- Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1989), Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines* (1988), Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980), and, not to mention, Salman Rusdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980).

Writing in the 1980s, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh could afford to depart from the realistic mode of writing that Khushwant Singh had to use in *Train to Pakistan*, and adopt postmodernist tools: for Desai non-linear narrative and a localized view of history, for Rushdie magical realism, and for Ghosh broken narrative and temporal shifts. However, Bapsi Sidhwa stuck to the traditional realistic mode in *Ice-Candy-Man* though a lot of dream sequences in the novel imply that she was not altogether impervious to postmodernist influences after all. Postmodernist mode enabled the novelists to be better equipped for oblique representation of partition trauma as they were free from the obligation of linear narrative that corresponded to the objective world. In Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, the Partition only forms the background to the story, so there is no question of direct representation. Far from the actual flames of New Delhi, the Das family's life in Old Delhi changes entirely during 1947-1948; it falls asunder—some of the members dying and others going their separate ways. Almost forty years on, however, the house

does not change a bit as if time has obsessively been stuck in 'that summer' of 1947. Despite its apparent absence, the Partition, therefore, has its ubiquitous presence in the novel in the form of the old house or as the severance of ties between siblings. The present research will point out the various aspects of indirect representation with reference to *The Clear Light of Day* and the idea of indirect referentiality of traumatic events at the core of trauma studies will, therefore, be demonstrated through the analysis of the novel.

Kamila Shamsie (2013) in her introduction to Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* regretted that the book "has not quite been accorded its deserved place as one of the leading 'Partition novels'..." (p. ix). This, she believes, "may have something to do with its sidelong view: glancing allusions and attention to tiny details which echo and reverberate, rather than directness" (p. ix). At a superficial level, it could indeed appear that the novel is about a family, especially the growth of four siblings, a significant part of whose life merely coincides with the Partition. A profounder look, however, will reveal that the novel deals with history's intrusion into a family's existence. It gives a localized view of the effects of a larger historical phenomenon, i.e., the Partition. Readers will not find the terrifying depictions of partition violence, such as trainload of corpses, sacks full of women's severed breasts, beheading of men, women drowning themselves in the well to save their honor, or people's terrible experiences of migration on foot leaving behind what they knew as 'home' all their life. This mode of representation is in contrast with the gruesome scenes of violence, as visualized in the fictions like Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* or in the oral narratives collected and compiled by Urvashi Butalia in *The Other Side of Silence* (1998). The indirect representation of the Partition long prevented the analysis of the novel as a partition fiction, although recent works of critics like Rituparna Roy, Priyamvada Gopal et al. have firmly established it in the category of partition fiction. Roy (2010) writes that, in *Clear Light of Day*, Anita Desai

...moves away from the private universe of solitary, alienated characters [as in her earlier novels] to portray an individual [Bimla], who, though highly introverted herself, has perforce to negotiate with the outside world and public events. And this she is obliged to do because of the intrusion of the events of the Partition in her life. The Partition is indeed integrally related to the plot of the novel, and no matter how unnoticed this particular aspect of the novel has been, it is indubitably true that it is possible to read Anita Desai's fourth novel as one related to the Partition. (p. 82)

The indirect representation of the Partition has actually something to do with Desai's perception of the world and her understanding of the responsibility of the author. She seems to believe that the process of writing involves tearing away layers after layers of illusion in order to get to the truth:

Writing is to me a process of discovering the truth—the truth that is nine-tenths of the iceberg that lies submerged beneath the one-tenth visible portion we call Reality. Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploring this underlying truth.... (cited in Roy, 2010, p. 80)

Therefore, she is more interested as a novelist to remove the veneer of 'reality' and find the 'truth' underneath than faithfully depict 'reality.' Through the representation of lives and times of Raja, Bimla, Tara and Baba, Desai demonstrates the impact of the Partition in (inter)personal terms rather than succumbing to the hegemonic narratives of the grand political event of the Independence and its sacrifices. In fact, she makes her protagonist Bim speak mockingly of the high-sounding myths of Indian independence when Bakul asks for Tara's hand, "I don't think you need to ask anyone—except Tara. Modern times. Modern India. Independent India" (Desai, 2013, p. 123).

Talking about Desai's remarkable novel *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), Tarun K. Saint (2010) comments on a general aspect of her style, "The oblique treatment of the chilling facts about genocide as well as... apparently random, manifestations of violence is characteristic of Desai's style" (p. 192). This style of 'oblique treatment' acquires very subtle mode of representation in *Clear Light of Day*. Indeed, not a single description of mob confrontation or communal violence can be found in the novel. The only visible sign of violence is the seemingly everlasting fire in the horizon seen from the rooftop of Das family house throughout the summer of 1947. Desai (2013) implies the psychological impact of the spectacle on Bim:

The city was in flames that summer. Every night fires lit up the horizon beyond the city walls so that the sky was luridly tinted with festive flames of orange and pink, and now and then a column of white smoke would rise and stand solid as an obelisk in the dark. Bim, pacing up and down on the rooftop, would imagine she could hear the sound of shots and of cries and screams, but they lived so far outside the city, out in the Civil Lines where the gardens and bungalows were quiet and sheltered behind their hedges, that it was really rather improbable and she told herself she only imagined it. (p. 67)

The 'sound of shots and of cries and screams' Bim hears are auditory hallucinations triggered by the sight of flames licking up the sky. This way, the public atrocity, though taking place far away, impinges on her psyche and is likely to have an impact on her post-Partition psychological construction and growth as well. In Bim and Tara's conversations about the Partition and the family circumstances of the time, it is always referred to as 'that summer' as if just by indefinitely uttering it, memories come rushing back, suggesting its significance in their collective remembrance, which, Ho (2006) believes, inspires "an elegiac conjuration of lost realities..." (p. 38).

In *Clear Light of Day*, the Partition is actually as much of an idea as it is a cataclysmic historical event that took place at a particular time. Desai never focuses on the violence of the event, but rather on the tensions it causes between Raja and Bimla. '[S]ibling rivalry,' as Suvir Kaul (2011) puts it, is an unavoidable metaphor for the antagonism between two newly born nations (p. 8). Desai, however, turns the metaphor into a literal severance of ties between siblings that play out on the family level pointing to what the subcontinent went through on the national-political level. Afflicted with tuberculosis throughout the summer of 1947, Raja squirms in his bed for not being able to be of any help to his mentor Hyder Ali's family, who are in danger because of the growing communal animosity between Hindus and Muslims. His mental agony is aggravated once he learns that the Muslim family has left their house secretly without even informing him. In such times as the Partition, there is sufficient reason for Raja to be concerned about their neighbors (who are also their landowners), all the more because he is presumably attracted to Benazir, Hyder Ali's daughter. He is only relieved when Hyder Ali manages to send him a letter, one that informs of their safe stay in Hyderabad and conveys Benazir's regards. Bim nurses Raja tirelessly back to health, but as soon as he recovers, he grows impatient to go to Hyderabad to help Hyder Ali with the business instead of looking after the remaining members of the family—Bim and Baba, their parents and Aunt Mira having already died with Tara married to Bakul. Eventually, Raja deserts them one day even after promising Bim that he would look after her and Baba. Much later, when Hyder Ali dies, Raja now married to Benazir, inherits all his father-in-law's properties, including the house rented to Bim and Baba. Immediately after that, Raja writes an offensively condescending letter to Bim, letting her know that she can stay in that house as long as she wants at the same rent the family always paid. Raja's turning into a landlord from the beloved brother of the sister to whom he owes his life pushes their relationship beyond the point of reconciliation. Much of the novel deals with Bim's residual anger for Raja and Tara's effort to mitigate it. Their long antagonism is paralleled with the tension between Hindus and Muslims during the freedom

movement, the Partition and even after the creation of two separate countries along religious lines. Saint (2010) has offered an insightful interpretation of Raja's irresponsible conduct:

...Raja's perception of the death of old Delhi culture [with the advent of the Partition, of course] and his own struggle to retain a connection with remnants of this culture leads to an over-identification with the victim community, damaging his bond with Bim. Though the targets of organised violence in Delhi are Muslims, he is beset by trauma as witness to this violence, and thus unknowingly repeats the moment of separation in the breakdown of his relationship with his sister. (p. 200)

What is apparent here is that the traumatic re-enactment of Raja is a direct consequence of the Partition, and the antagonistic relationship between India and Pakistan as well as Hindus and Muslims is reflected in the severance of ties between him and Bim.

With Desai's insistent motif of sibling rivalry, she implicitly hints at the communal antagonism that is often aptly referred to as 'fratricidal violence.' The Mishra girls, abandoned by their husbands, work tirelessly in their dance school "still prancing through their Radha-Krishna dances and impersonating lovelorn maidens" in a cruel irony of fate, while their brothers sit in the lawn all day sipping whisky bought with their sisters' earnings (Desai, 2013, p. 51). Mulk even accuses them of being too much of penny-pinchers for not entertaining his music guru and accompaniments properly. Besides sibling relationships, other relationships are shown to be very fragile as well in the novel, liable to break down under the slightest pressure of disagreement regarding lifestyles. The Mishra boys' wives refuse to stay with them in Old Delhi for long because they are drawn to the New Delhi glamor, and the Mishra girls are abandoned for their lack of sophistication presumably required in New Delhi high society. It appears almost that there is an invisible partition between the two parts of Delhi as there is between the people who are supposed to be bound together whether by contracts, if not love, or by blood.

Again, as Niaz Zaman (1999) points out, Desai uses images of illness and madness for an indirect representation of the Partition (p. 220). Raja's illness, Baba's retardation, Aunt Mira's spiral descent into alcohol induced madness and the heat of the summer—all create an unsavory environment in the Das family house. But what connection, if any, do they have with the Partition? The present research would argue that these familial afflictions have their roots in the violent political chaos as well. Raja's convalescence is delayed by his frequent fretting about the Hyder Alis, which causes his temperature to rise and results in tiredness and sweating even though Doctor Bishwas says that it is a very mild case of tuberculosis. And the flames Aunt Mira hallucinates as leaping to consume her precipitating her descent into alcoholism might well be induced by the fire seen in the horizon (Desai 2013, p. 118). This is very likely because when she cuts her hand with a splintered glass and Doctor Biswas treats it with extreme gentleness and compassion, Aunt Mira's face beams and "Bim realised with a pang that she had not seen such a happy look on the old lady's face since before the troubles of last summer began" (Desai, 2013, p. 135). Kamila Shamsie (2013) also believes that her "alcoholism in '47 can be seen as a reaction to the madness of the world outside..." (p. ix). Aunt Mira's addiction and insanity at least inhibit Baba's growth because he has been showing signs of remarkable improvement only after her arrival. All this illness and insanity gradually transforms the Das house into an unhealthy abode where "unease was in the air like a swarm of germs, an incipient disease" (Desai, 2013, p. 95).

If one looks closely at the picnic episode of their adolescence, in which Bim and Tara accompany the Mishra boys and girls and the girls' possible suitors, one can find yet another parallel with the Partition violence. The swarm of bees that attacks Bim resembles rioting mobs, and Tara's running away instead of trying to save her sister leaves her guilty for life. She is like a

witness to the partition violence, one who turns her face away from a traumatic event and carries the burden of guilt all her life. Tara's trauma is evident when Bakul states that she has always had a fear about bees that are most likely to trigger her memory of that event in her adolescence (Desai, 2013, p. 228). However, neither Bim nor Bakul pay her any attention, eliminating all the possibilities of coming to terms with her trauma. Desai has indeed a remarkable understanding of the recovery of trauma. She writes, "She [Tara] wanted to ask for forgiveness and understanding, not simply forgetfulness and incomprehension" (Desai, 2013, p. 229). This, as any trauma specialist would agree, is a major step in coming to terms with trauma, and, with this statement, Desai conveys an insightful message to the still-warring communities and countries. By showing the trauma of a personal guilt and the way of negotiating with it, she, in fact, demonstrates how collective/cultural traumas such as the Partition and its after-effects are to come to terms with.

Communal tension during the partition had a linguistic dimension as well, one that eventually led to the relegation of Urdu to an inferior status and official privileging of Hindi. Urdu used to be the official language of Delhi and a much appreciated linguistic medium of creative writing. However, during the upheaval of the freedom movement in the 40s and strengthening of identity along communal lines, Urdu was seen to contain the Muslim tradition while Hindus identified their culture with Hindi. Raja always has a great regard for Urdu, which is further goaded by his unlimited access to Hyder Ali's library and later by his association with elite Muslim politicians and poets. Full of contempt for Hindi, he composes Urdu poetry, following the rich poetic tradition of Urdu. His sisters, however, cannot read Raja's poetry, for after the Partition, students could no longer choose between Urdu and Hindi in the schools of North India (Desai, 2013, p. 72). The respective superiority and inferiority assigned to Hindi and Urdu as a consequence of the Partition demonstrates how it upsets the cultural fabric of Delhi. Raja's admiration of Urdu and his awe of the *mushairas* at Hyder Alis' prompt him to pursue Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, a university predominantly attended by Muslim students. Yet, his father tears up his admission form due to his objection to letting Raja go to Jamia, which results in a regular confrontation between the father and the son. Raja holds his ground until one evening his father explains the reason for his objection:

I'm talking about the political situation. Don't you know anything about it? Don't you know what a struggle is going on for Pakistan? How the Muslims are pressing the British to divide the country and give them half? There is going to be trouble, Raja - there are going to be riots and slaughter.... If you, a Hindu boy, are caught in Jamia Millia, the centre of Islamic studies—as you call it you will be torn to bits, you will be burnt alive. (Desai, 2013, p. 79)

Raja, brought up within the confines of a parochial and uneventful Old Delhi society, though aware, to some extent, of the political situation, fails to understand its bearing on the plans of his personal life. The intersection of larger politico-historical events and people's personal lives still eluding him, he wonders naively whether anybody is going to pose a threat to his life if he studies at Jamia Millia. His father makes it plain to him: "Who will do that to you? Muslims, for trying to join them when they don't want you and don't trust you, and Hindus, for deserting them and going over to the enemy. Hindus and Muslims alike will be out for your blood. It isn't safe, Raja, it isn't safe, son" (Desai, 2013, p. 79). Raja relents finally and grudgingly admits himself into Hindu College to study, ironically enough, English literature on the eve of the departure of the British from the subcontinent only to discover that it is a hotbed for Hindu fanatic politics. Imagining him as an easy recruit for the cause of an undivided India, the political cadres approach him and find out that Raja has already accepted Pakistan as an idea because of his association with the Muslim elites at the evening parties in Hyder Ali's house. Consequently, he is branded as a

'traitor' (Desai, 2013, p. 87) and reported to the police as a 'Pakistan [*sic*] spy' (Desai, 2013, p. 90). Indeed Raja's getting involved in the political turmoil was very likely, especially because of his romantic ideas of being a Byronic hero, were it not for his contraction of tuberculosis. Even though Raja (or any other character in *Clear Light of Day*, for that matter) never has any political affiliations, nor does he identify himself with any particular ideology, politics intrudes into his life—so much so that he has to make alterations in his plans of educational specialization. This is how, Desai illustrates the role of politics and history in an individual's life, and she does so not by inviting her readers to witness gory scenes of fratricidal killings, but by showing the socio-cultural, familial and personal implications of the Partition.

If the Partition is a seminal moment in South Asian history, its reverberation in people's life through time is almost as significant. What Saint (2010) terms as '[p]artition's [a]fter life' is to be understood in terms of its ubiquitous consequence in the private and public lives of the people of the region (p. 23). The fractures and fissures of the Indian subcontinent still resonate in the subsequent divisions (the independence of Bangladesh, for example) and various secessionist movements, frequent communal riots and degradation of minority communities. Trauma gets re-enacted in individual lives as well; the victim, victimizer, victim-turned-victimizer and witness—all bear the burden of horrifying memories that resurrect themselves every now and then. Even those who have not been apparently affected by partition violence, have had to readjust their lives to the new socio-cultural formations necessitated by the massive tear in the social fabric caused by the Partition. Bim seems to be completely aware of this when she tells Tara,

Isn't it strange how life won't flow, like a river, but moves in jumps, as if it were held back by locks that are opened now and then to let it jump forwards in a kind of flood? There are these long still stretches—nothing happens—each day is exactly like the other plodding, uneventful—and then suddenly there is a crash—mighty deeds take place—momentous events—even if one doesn't know it at the time—and then life subsides again into the backwaters till the next push, the next flood? That summer was certainly one of them—the summer of '47—. (Desai, 2013, p. 64)

After the Partition changed the world as they knew it till 1947, there seems to have come, in the Das family house, again a time when nothing changes. Desai (2013) treats the house itself as a character in *Clear Light of Day* that has a 'spirit' (p. 31)—one that is in a 'petrified state' stuck in the time of 1947 (p. 18). The house is an embodiment of the Partition, as it were, for since the drastic alterations of the Das family in the years 1947-48, time has come to a halt, and the petrified house represents temporal immobility. Reflecting on how she finds the house always in a petrified state at every return from abroad, Tara tells Bim, "How everything goes on and on here, and never changes.... and it is all exactly the same, whenever we come home" (Desai, 2013, p. 6). Even Baba's repeated record-playing of the music of 40s, like traumatic re-enactment, obsessively holds time back to the Partition. The house is also a site for an eternal presence of the past—the dead and the absent coexisting with the living. Looking at the card table, for instance, Tara reflects, "Here in the house it was not just the empty, hopeless atmosphere of childhood, but the very spirits of her parents that brooded on here they still sat, crouched about the little green baize folding table..." (p. 33). Raja, though absent, is always present in the remembrances, which are not always pleasant, of Bim, who keeps his letter in which he declared his decision of letting Bim and Baba stay in the house as long as they want to at the same rent as a reminder of his fraternal betrayal. His poems—both in Urdu and in Bim's translation—are also preserved as a reminder of his poetic aspirations as well as derivativeness. The pets, though long dead, have now been replaced—Begum's son Badshah now emits insistent barks when Bim, Tara and Bakul are late for dinner and Aunt Mira's jet black cat's place has been taken by a similar one whom Bim indulges with saucers of milk. So,

time has stopped in the Das house just like Baba's record at one point gets stuck in the old, rusted pin of the gramophone. Commenting on the stillness of time, Bim asks Tara, "[I]f we still had Mira Masi with us, wouldn't that complete the picture? This faded old picture in its petrified frame?" (Desai, 2013, p. 7) Only Bim does not realize that she herself has replaced Aunt Mira, completing the petrified frame of the old house. It perhaps dawns on her like a surprise when she good-humoredly claims her prerogative to influence Tara's daughters and Tara replies, "You can have all the time you want with them, ...and influence them as much as you like. In our family, aunts have that prerogative. Like Mira Masi had" (Desai 2013, p. 262). The insistent presence of the past as symbolized by the house, Priyamvada Gopal (2009) would agree, is a significant aspect of trauma and Desai communicates it with subtle detailing, since direct statement of the fact falls into the realm of unrepresentability (p. 154-155).

In the last part of the novel, time at the Das house is again allowed to progress as the siblings' relationships are set to acquire new formations after a long torpor. Tara's visit has been an emotionally charged one for both the sisters and has made Bim reconsider her longstanding antagonism towards Raja. The culmination of her emotional crisis is precipitated by a letter from Mr. Sharma, a partner of their father's business that they have inherited, insisting on attending a meeting. Bim is positively annoyed because she does not understand the business very well, let alone Baba. She decides to sell off their share, so that she does not have to deal with it any longer though Tara suggests that all people concerned, including Raja, should be consulted first. On one particular day before Tara's family departs for Hyderabad, Bim's irritation with every little thing, such as the jingling of a bunch of keys at Tara's waist and her not eating a hot curry at lunch or the sight of a smashed pigeon's egg, keep mounting up until Baba's loud music takes her to the boiling point. She unleashes all her anger on the innocent Baba telling him about her decision regarding the business. If that part of the income is gone, she continues, she might not be able to afford his expenses and Baba might have to leave for Hyderabad to stay with Raja's family. Bim regrets her cruel and illogical onslaught on her mentally challenged brother immediately and feels like the Ancient Mariner of Coleridge's *Rime*:

It was Baba's silence and reserve and otherworldliness that she had wanted to break open and ransack and rob, like the hunter who, moved by the white bird's grace as it hovers in the air above him, raises his crossbow and shoots to claim it for his own— his treasure, his loot—and brings it hurtling down to his feet—no white spirit or symbol of grace but only a dead albatross, a cold package of death. (Desai, 2013, p. 250)

Bim's rash act comparable to that of the Ancient Mariner's arouses a feeling of guilt in her, leading to introspection. Finally, she comes to the realization that everyone—including she and Raja—makes rash mistakes, yet with enough love and affection, forgiveness is the only way to redeem relationships: "Somehow she would have to forgive Raja that unforgivable letter. Somehow she would have to wrest forgiveness from Baba for herself. These were great rents torn in the net that the knife of love had made. Stains of blood that the arrow of love had left" (Desai, 2013, p. 252). If *Clear Light of Day* has any message for enthusiasts of trauma studies, it is that the past has to be confronted and negotiated with, introspection has to be made and apology needs to be granted. This later realization of Bim demonstrates on the level of the family how communal and national violent pasts should be approached and dealt with in order to forestall their repetition. Sitting on the lawn of Mishra house and listening to Mulk's guru's performance, Bim remembers a line from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*: "Time the destroyer is time the preserver" (Desai, 2013, p. 277). Time indeed can bring cataclysm in the relationships between siblings and among communities, but it is also time that has the capacity to heal traumatic pasts, which cannot be forgotten but only forgiven.

The inherent unrepresentability of trauma poses a great challenge for creative artists, since art, in such cases, strives to represent what is fundamentally unrepresentable. As a postmodernist text, *Clear Light of Day* has the advantage of not sticking to the realist representation of events. In contrast to *Midnight's Children*, for example, *Clear Light of Day* has a much more somber tone and Desai's represents a localized view of the Partition in her novel. Even though the political upheaval of the time is most often relegated to the periphery of the narrative, it affects the life of the Das family profoundly. The only apparent sign of the partition violence in the novel is the flames in the horizon seen from the rooftop, but its psychological effect on the members of the family is enormous. Aunt Mira's spiral descent into alcoholism and insanity, Raja's delayed recuperation, and Tara's virtual escape from the sickness of the environment of the house could all be attributed, albeit indirectly, to the Partition. Bim and Raja's eventual severance of ties replicates the breaking down of the subcontinent into two countries along religious lines. The brilliance of the novel lies in the fact that Desai implies some very insightful ways of recovery from the individual and collective traumas. By admitting and apologizing for the actions of the past, as Desai shows with Tara's example, one can hope to move on from the pernicious pull of the past. Bim herself realizes the vulnerability of human beings to making mistakes and the importance of forgiveness towards the end of *Clear Light of Day*. Though these are individual instances of coming to terms with trauma, their implications for the traumatized collective are equally viable. Desai, by invoking Iqbal at the very end of the novel, stresses the cultural commonalities between antagonistic communities, which can bridge gaps despite the differences. By the localized and familial views of the historical upheaval, *Clear Light of Day*, in effect, indirectly represents the partition trauma, its aftermath, and ways of recovery.

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## An Existential Reading of *Family Ties*

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### Abstract

Examining different characters of *Family Ties* (Lispector, 1972), the present paper aims at demonstrating Clarice Lispector's projection of ties at various different levels often starting with family ties, stretching between individuals, objects, and natural world and then untying or losing previously existing ties. The paper highlights the attention she pays to the anxiety concerning all the disturbances of the body and the mind that has been so long denied. Through the research it is shown how her different characters respond to the cultivation of self, and bestows prominent attention to self-respect resulting from self-doubt. Her experimentations with female characters are not confined to the conflict of male and female; rather it continues with multifarious themes which find their abode in her collection of thirteen short stories entitled *Lacos de Familia* (*Family Ties*) where she writes about human suffering and failure, the disarray of humanity, human's total awareness of inevitable alienation and the pressing need to overcome danger, and the most forcefully of all, encountering ultimate nothingness. Influenced by existentialist writers, Lispector illuminates the conflict between public and private self, and magnifies the terror upon realizing the failure of language to communicate; that results into the use of different tools of language to find a rescue (Pontiero, 1972. p. 134). Though the existential struggle of the characters consists of series of paradoxes with no solution, the paper will discuss the steps they have taken and the time they have passed through.

### Introduction

Human desire has been presented by the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector (1920-1977) as being inseparable from language. Her formula of paying attention on self resembles the idea of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984), who attributed the importance to self-respect and promotes the idea that "self-respect is exercised by depriving oneself of pleasure or by confining one's indulgence to marriage or procreation" (Foucault, 1986. P. 41). Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the German philosopher also points out in *Being and Time* (1996), that science and reason are the highest obstacles to human self-development for presenting humans only as objects of impersonal investigation and practical manipulation since human existence could not be valued through rational-scientific thinking or through social practice, but only by examining and upholding one's self. He also looked for an alternative to the objectification of language. Likewise, Lispector unties or sets loose the ties among family members to let them experience crises so that they become aware of their existence, experience nothingness, and face absolute freedom. While facing this absolute freedom, just to avoid the anxiety, some of them choose to retreat back into their secured shells rather than consciously bearing the burden of responsibility for their actions but on the other hand, many of her characters impress us by their determination and resolve (Fitz, 1980, p. 59). Family bonds, which are supposed to represent ties of closeness and tenderness, turn out to be nothing but chains of bondage and become so frustrating that these bonds can preclude people from trying out new experiences which might have offered the family members to live richer lives. To figure out or impose any fixed meaning to the stories of *Family Ties* is difficult as they challenge the fixed notions of reality. Though *Family Ties* (*Lacos de Familia*) is a collection of thirteen separate stories, freedom, despair, solitude, and the incapacity to communicate are the themes that weave the stories into one thread.

Lispector's *Family Ties* evokes questions similar to Poststructuralism and asks important and challenging questions about the relationship of language to human existence, and about the political implications that we derive from our desire of truth, certainty, and clarity of meaning in an unstable, ambiguous world (Fitz, 2001). Not only that, the writer brought down the ontological and epistemological question posed by Poststructuralism to the level of everyday human experience. In her stories of *Family Ties*, we can see reflections of existentialist writers, most remarkably of Heidegger, who reject the application of scientific reductionist principles in the understanding of the nature of human existence. Existentialists ask us to reflect on the language we use to make sense of our experiences which often determines how we develop a view of ourselves and others (Cooper, 2003). If we put psychological perspective in contrast to this existentialist philosophy, we find that it considers human existence to be subject to laws similar to those of the natural world where personality comprises a relatively stable set of variables which change little over the lifespan (Cooper, 2003). If we observe closely, we may realize that much of our thinking about individual and collective attempts to understand why people do certain things or behave in certain ways is shaped according to this aforementioned perspective. If we pick up any book or magazine article, it will become clear that search for definitive answers to understand questions of human psychology occupy everyday experience (Cooper, 2003). Though this perspective is the most common way of deriving sense of the human condition, existential perspective can be an alternative to this and that is what we notice among the characters of *Family Ties*.

The stories of *Family Ties* present a series of "victimas agonicas" (meaning victims of agony, a term used by Miguel de Unamuno) who find themselves trying desperately to maintain an equilibrium between "reality" and their own powerful imagination. They are represented as a double-edged dagger, since on the one hand deviation from the norms that society erects leads them to rejection, unhappiness, and alienation, and on the other the failure to retreat into a personal fantasy world works for them no more than a cowardly escape mechanism (Herman, 1967, p. 69). Whether to embrace any of the defense mechanisms, like denial, disavowal, or to face sheer naked realities; conflicts keep haunting Lispector's characters. The existentialist struggle, for the author, consists in a series of paradoxes with no solution. How does one establish a balance between the need to conform and the pulsating inner life that demands expression? If one is in constant fear of revealing oneself, how can one interact with other on an authentic level? The main characters in *Family Ties*, nevertheless, are fully conscious that true communication is impossible: society is an artificial barrier that must not be transcended as they may not be courageous enough to meet the bare absurdity of life. Yet their essential problem, as might be expected, is not to find a meaning for their senseless lives, but to run from the meaning they have already acknowledged within themselves but cannot accept. In order to feel themselves part of humanity, in so far as they are able, they force themselves to cover their deepest feelings with the mechanized actions expected of them, thus perpetuating their own isolation. The outside world or other human beings delineate threats to the precarious balance necessary (Herman, 1967, p. 69).

In Lispector's short stories, we notice that the dilemma between our dual natures is we always dream to be free but end up trying to escape our freedom. We all tend to act in what Sartre calls 'bad faith' to escape our freedom (Sartre, 1956). We attempt to deceive ourselves and act as if we are not free, as if we are really determined by our nature, our body, or the expectations of other people (Sartre, 1956). We are also familiar with the way we all play roles, identifying ourselves, or seeing ourselves in terms of how other people see us, letting other people determine what we are instead of deciding ourselves what we will be. We tend to transform ourselves into the image that other people have of us (Sartre, 1956). It is often easier to let someone else determine what we will be than to do it ourselves, especially when we see our value in terms of the acceptance we get from other people. We all see little pictures of ourselves projected by other people and we often tend to

try to make ourselves into these little pictures by playing roles (Sartre, 1956). The secret of human flourishing and of moral action lies in avoiding bad faith and honoring the responsibility we have to create our own nature and values (Sartre, 1956). Existentialist enjoins us to be ourselves and make the source of our nature and values our own internal decisions rather than the pictures of ourselves that appear in our minds from external sources. Sartre says that the coward makes him cowardly, that the hero makes him heroic (Sartre, 1956). There's always a possibility for the coward not to be cowardly anymore and for the hero to stop being heroic (Sartre, 1956). What counts is total involvement; only one particular action or set of circumstances is not total involvement (Sartre, 1956).

### **Body and Mind; Public and Private**

Maria Quiteria presents another picture in "The Daydreams of a Drunk Woman" (Lispector, 1972, p. 7-16) where she stumbles in the path of cultivation of self through communion and self-discovery, which occurred at the moment of becoming one with a group at the party when she was at a loss searching the bond or meaning of the conversation of the party people and events that result into her 'difficulties with verbal expression'. She feels the gap between the word (sign) and the reality (experience) –

the barren people in that restaurant. Not a real man among them. How sad it really all seemed . . . . And everything in the restaurant seemed so remote, the one thing distant from the other, as if the one might never be able to converse with the other" (Lispector, 1972, p. 12).

She discovered the opposition of body and mind among the party people in the party:

Saturday night, her every-day soul lost, and how satisfying to lose it, and to remind her former days, only her small, ill-kempt hands- and here she was now with her elbows resting on the white and red checked tablecloth like a gambling table, deeply launched upon a degrading and revolting existence. And what about her laughter?...this outburst of laughter which mysteriously emerged from her full white throat, in response to the polite manners of the businessman, an outburst of laughter coming from the depths of that sleep. And from the depths of that security who has a body. (Lispector, 1972, p. 11).

To find a balance between her body and mind, Maria took shelter of self-respect that she was trying to secure at the cost of her security of having a body. The urge of losing self-respect was provoking her continuously and finally she failed to act as society demands her to act. Looking at the other lady wearing hat in the party, Maria could not help noticing the lady's better social position to her own that she symbolized with the hat.

Oh how humiliated she felt at having come to the bar without a hat, and her head now felt bare. And that madam with her affectations, playing the refined lady! I know what you need, my beauty, you and your sallow boy friend! And if you think I envy you and your flat chest, let me assure you that I don't give a damn for you and your hats. (Lispector, 1972, p. 13).

The experience of sickness and physical limitation present the body as an 'other' which the mind is always endeavoring to make its own. Looking at her image in "the dressing table with three mirrors" (Lispector, 1972, p. 7), Maria gets lost into the imaginary because the little 'other' in her is in search of the reflection and projection of the 'Ego' that takes shelter on the reflection of her body in the mirror as the little 'other' is entirely inscribed in 'The Imaginary order' (Lacan, 2006, p. 69). On the other hand, the big 'Other' which mediates the relationship with that other subject must first be considered a locus, the locus in which speech is constituted. Lacan equates this radical

alterity with language and the law. The big 'Other' is inscribed in 'The Symbolic order' (Lacan, 2006, p. 40). Lacan in *Écrits* stresses that speech and language are beyond one's conscious control; they come from another place, outside consciousness, and then 'the unconscious is the discourse of the 'Other' (Lacan, 2006, p. 243). Lispector's narratives are driven by conflicted and fragmented poststructural sites than as stable presences, and in a context heavily freighted with both psychoanalysis and sociopolitical significance; they embody the desire of the 'Other' that Lacan speaks of in *Écrits* (Lacan, 2006, p. 40). In Maria's case her mind plays as the 'Other' which is trying to gain control over her body with the thoughts of the previous night at the party. The mirror here represents a specific type of threshold chronotope, an object that separates the liminal time-space between different representations visible in a narrative (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 248). A mirror is a visible marker of the threshold between where a person is and an other im(possible) space. Time is essentially instantaneous, in this Chronotope, and it appears as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of the biographical time. It delineates that the subject is "caught" by (or "up in") things (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 248). In the centre of this temporal-spatial construction lies the will of the subject to process new information and to take new decisions, which is in conflict with "the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 248).

Maria requires something that resists representations, which is pre-mirror, pre-imaginary, pre-symbolic, as everything loses its 'reality' once it is symbolized, and is not made conscious through language. Her world is so fragmented that only "stream of consciousness" fits to uphold the worlds she produces. As a way out, Maria finds that words have no connection to the thing described when "she looked around her, patient and obedient" and said, "Ah, words, nothing but words, the objects in this room lined up in the order of words, to form those confused and irksome phrases that he who knows how, will read" (Lispector, 1972, p. 14). The entire system of the unconscious/conscious manifests in an endless web of signifiers, signified and associations.

Maria gets frightened with her discovery that things, in their actual existence, have nothing to do with the names we give them, and that the existence of things has no connection with the essence which we assign them. Everyday household chores seem futile to her. All the duty she used to perform with utmost care, lose their value to her. She understands that her mind is the source of whatever meaning, truth, or value her world has. She alone absurdly, is responsible for giving meaning to her world. To handle this crisis, she started free association of words which is the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis. Like stream of consciousness, this process of free association involves allowing whatever comes to mind to be spoken, selecting nothing and omitting nothing, and giving up any critical attitude or direct forcing in the face of a problem.

'Hey there! Guess who came to see me today?' She mused as a feasible and interesting topic of conversation. 'No idea, tell me,' those eyes asked her with a gallant smile, those sad eyes set in one of those pale faces that make one feel so uncomfortable. 'Maria Quiteria, my dear!' she replied coquettishly with her hand on her hip. 'And who, might we ask, would she be?' they insisted gallantly, but now without any expression. 'You!' she broke off, slightly annoyed. How boring!

Oh what a succulent room! Here she was, fanning herself in Brazil. The sun, trapped in the blinds, shimmered on the wall like the strings of a guitar. (Lispector, 1972, p.8).

Wittgenstein told about the practice of psychoanalysis that this free association process opens a field of possibilities of sense that rather than truth and falsity can force upon us the question as to how language represents and makes sense. Instead of being aware of how the conflicts and contradictions created by confusions in the use of language create problems and despair, we try to force them into a particular pattern to achieve a desired result, to capture one

kind of experience and avoid another (Heaton, 2000, p.14). It is essential to find not merely what is to be said before a difficulty but how one must speak about it (Heaton, 2000, p.14). How something is said determines what is said - it shows the thought (Heaton, 2000, p.14). Free association encourages one to focus on the mode of speaking, the way we apply words, the way we feel (Heaton, 2000, p.14). The tone and gestures of our words express more than what we say (Heaton, 2000, p.14). In free association, a game of language is being played which shows language in use but without any particular purpose (Heaton, 2000, p.14). There is no fixed rule in free associating and it is a way of giving free reign and attention to the way the mind creates meanings and make associations, bringing them in all sorts of ways (Heaton, 2000, p.14). It helps to de-centre our fixed identity that constitutes whom we believe we are (Heaton, 2000, p.14). Like psychoanalysis, it is a talking cure; but unlike psychoanalysis, there is no external authority, no ideal, to which it must correspond (Heaton, 2000, p.14). The weight is put on the use of words, because this shows our approach to the problem, and it is this showing that lets us see the deformities that distort our thought (Heaton, 2000, p.14).

Maria talks about self-respect again and again in the story as if this is her centre. After her day long involvement with her inner self, she is thinking of coming to her regular public self. To her the source of self-respect is having youthful body, maintaining household works properly, and playing the role of mother and wife.

‘God, I’ve lost my self-respect, I have! My day for washing and darning socks... What a lazy bitch you’ve turned out to be!’ she scolded herself, inquisitive and pleased ...shopping to be done, fish to remember, already so late on a hectic sunny morning. (Lispector, 1972, p. 10).

Even though she retreats back to her comfort shell, she goes through the perplexity of her existential crisis that becomes the distinguished marker of her life.

the day after tomorrow that house of hers would be a sight worth seeing: she would give it a scouring with soap and water which would get rid of all the dirt! ‘You mark my words,’ she threatened in her rage. Ah, she was feeling so well. so strong, as if she still had milk in those firm breasts. (Lispector, 1972, p. 15).

### **Love and Responsibility**

While Maria Quiteria keeps herself busy with the puzzle of words, Anna in “Love” (Lispector, 1972, p. 17-27) is driven to the extreme limits of her potential and in her anguish and in her confrontation with a blind man, she shows both her greatness and her misery. She can be said great in terms of existentialist philosophy because of her sudden discovered freedom and yet miserable because she is shaken confronting absolute responsibility. Anna’s status before utilizing the anxiety of life is she ‘anonymously nourishes life’. She has chosen to be a wife, a mother, and to possess a home. In the void of the blind man’s gaze, Anna finds a self that is unknown even to her. So far she has lived the life of reflection of other people, the way they want her to be.

The story probes the way in which consciousness perceives objects. Lispector has masterfully created a world of exciting and terrifying perfection pervading the way how consciousness depicts objects. Anna became shocked at the blind man’s freedom to not gaze at her. She felt insulted at the careless way of the blind man’s chewing gum. The Brazilian critic Benedito Nunes has outlined the process as “familiar situations and things which we know and can control, are suddenly transformed into something strange, unexpected, and uncontrollable” (Pontiero, 1972, p. 136). The stories are formulated on the literary epiphany that concentrates on moments of insight. The privileged instant of cognition typically expands into interlocking patterns of

illumination and reflection in the mind of the protagonist (Fitz, 1980, p. 56). Anna enters into the totality of a new, higher level of awareness and being at the sight of the blind man's chewing gum in the tram: she understands "something disquieting was happening" (Lispector, 1972, p. 19). The sight destroys her equilibrium that balances her daily repeated activities.

The string bag felt rough between her fingers, not soft and familiar as when she had knitted it. The bag had lost its meaning; to find herself on the tram was a broken thread; she did not know what to do with the purchases on her lap: Like some strange music, the world started up again around her. The damage had been done..... it seemed to her that the people in the street were vulnerable, that they barely maintained their equilibrium on the surface of the darkness- and for a moment they appeared to lack any sense of direction. (Lispector, 1972, p. 20).

Now she feels the chain of action has been interrupted by the sight of the blind man's chewing gum. After this incident, she escapes momentarily from the psychological prison in which her conventionally used language and her social existence have placed her, because a crisis is a happening which suddenly removes us from the ordinary routines of our life (Lavin, 1984, p. 329). This event did not interrupt the life of other passengers in the tram. In a situation of crisis like this, one cannot react with one's every day habitual responses and one is thrown back upon oneself. Anna explores that tortured ambiguity of our existence; the privilege and the curse of being human and of confronting both our absolute freedom and the world's indifference.

Mysterious and sudden moments of crises lead characters along the paths of indecision to crucial moments of self-discovery and at time a very trivial episode can produce the most profound and dramatic intuition - the vital moment when time stands still and our daily existence is stripped bare of its comfortable conventional surfaces, leaving man alone in the solitude of his conscience and personality. Man's real problem is not that of imposing some meaning on his senseless existence, but of finding some escape from the meaning he has already discovered within himself that he/she refuses to accept (Pontiero, 1972, p. 136). "Through her compassion Anna felt that life was filled to the brim with a sickening nausea" (Lispector, 1972, p. 21). Entering the botanical garden Anna felt:

The trees were laden, and the world was so rich that it was rotting. When Anna reflected that there were children and grown men suffering hunger, the nausea reached her throat as if she were pregnant and abandoned. The moral of the garden was something different. Now that the blind man had guided her to it, she trembled on the threshold of a dark, fascinating world where monstrous water lilies floated. (Lispector, 1972, p. 23).

The Botanical garden stands for blossom and procreation but Anna is now aware of the other side of life and living and before digging into deeper sight of her latest discovery, "when she remembered the children" (Lispector, 1972, p. 23), she hurries for home. Epiphany is a moment of revelation, of ecstasy one would like to hold on to but which escapes through one's fingers; it remains nevertheless as something valuable gained; the experience becomes an end in itself. Anna, even undergoing epiphanies, remained chained to her everyday routine. To her, epiphanies serve only as conveyors of the awareness of the drabness of everyday existence. She went through an illumination and at the same time remained tied to family bonds.

The idea that love has splitting power is an important concept that runs through all of Lispector's work. She is very concerned with the complex, multi-layered relationships of people in love, with the tortured displays of selflessness and selfishness that love engenders. At home Anna meeting her child feels, "Life was vulnerable. She loved the world, she loved all things

created, she loved with loathing. . . . She had been touched by the demon of faith” (p. 24). Her heart “filled with the worst will to live” (Lispector, 1972, p. 25). She is in a dilemma. She faces the most profound alienation of all when she becomes aware of the otherness of the object and seeks to overcome its alienation by mastering it. “She no longer knew if she was on the side of the blind man or of the thick plants....With horror she discovered that she belonged to the strong part of the world” (Lispector, 1972, p. 25). And at the end of the story we see Anna is “combing her hair before the mirror, without any world for the moment in her heart” (Lispector, 1972, p. 27). She simply gives up, finding the struggle to establish and maintain an identity too much to endure.

### Public and Private

Catherine most of the time in “Family Ties” is in debate with the language she communicates with (Lispector, 1972, p. 90-107). When she speaks, she displays her public or social self that is utterly commonplace in word and deed. Though she is a character in a conventional social context, Catherine often uses words that function as transmitters of what all involved assume to be a commonly shared body of knowledge and thus engages her husband and her child in strikingly cryptic dialogue. As we notice, the story’s ultimate tension arises from the failure of language to communicate and derives from the fact that the main characters do not share a common body of language and they all operate in a state of nearly total isolation and conflict (Fitz, 1987, p. 427). Her spoken language only attempts to fill the void of lack of communication without carrying meaning for herself. On the other hand, the silence or the lapse of her communication often attempts to bear the weight of her unspoken language:

“I haven’t forgotten anything?” her mother asked. Catherine, too, had the impression something had been forgotten, and they looked apprehensively at each other- because, if something had really forgotten, it was too late now. . . .

“Mother,” said the woman. What had they forgotten to say to each other? But now it was too late. It seemed to her that the older woman should have said one day, “I am your mother, Catherine.” And she should have replied, “And I am your daughter.” (Lispector, 1972, p. 93-94).

Catherine’s conflict arises from the fact that she has to choose between either continuing a materially comfortable but intellectually blank existence or leading a new life that is intellectually illuminating but barren and perilous. The language used in Catherine’s story serves to underscore the tension that exists in Lispector’s work between the public and private identities of her characters. When Catherine, an urban middle-class wife and mother struggling to come to grip with her nascent sense of self-awareness, the text assumes the form of an indirect interior monologue (Fitz, 1987, p.426-427):

Relieved of her mother’s company, she had recovered her brisk manner of walking; alone it was much easier. . . . And things had disposed themselves in such a way that the sorrow of love seemed to her to be happiness- everything around her was so tender and alive, the dirty street, the old tram cars, orange peel on the pavements- strength flowed to and fro in her heart with a heavy richness. (Lispector, 1972, p. 94).

After the train departs with her mother, the existence that Catherine has neglected so far becomes obvious to her. Thinking of possibilities made her a conscious being, a being for itself that leads her to think of what she lacks, and what her possibilities are (Lavin, 1984, p. 354). Only as a conscious being one can be dissatisfied with oneself and desire not-to-be what one is now, and desire to be what one is not. She decides in an instant to leave her husband and went out with her son.

She understands that the relationship of love is hopeless because what her husband wants is not merely the physical possession but also to possess her freedom. For her husband Tony, "Saturdays were 'his own', but he liked his wife and child to be at home while he pursued his private occupations" (Lispector, 1972, p. 96).

Reaching home, Catherine hears her son calling her 'Mummy' and "It was the first time he had said 'Mummy' in that tone without asking for something. It was more than a verification: 'Mummy!'" (Lispector, 1972, p. 96). She tries to complete the sentence of the child and she understands "The truth could only be captured in symbols, and only in symbols would they receive it" (Lispector, 1972, p. 96). She does not confine it to symbolic communication, but like hermeneutics extended it to more fundamental, that is, human life and existence. Assertion that has played a central role in the philosophy of language, particularly in the twentieth century, has been designated as the paradigmatic linguistic form, the most neutral propositional form or attitude. Martin Heidegger claims that assertion is a derivative form of interpretation and objects the entire tradition of analyzing language, or rather sentences, in terms of the attribution of predicates to subjects because it conceives language as an *object*. There are two conceptions of language that run through the relevant sections of *Being and Time*. One is called *instrumental*, the other *constitutive*. According to the former, language is a tool; according to the later, it is an *Existenzial*, an essential attribute of Dasein means existence. Catherine became tired of the instrumental language and keeps seeking on language that is constitutive that will have the strength to carry on her existence (Heidegger, 1996, p. 114).

Lispector succeeds in showing how Catherine seeks solace in silence as we find Catherine unable to mean what she wants to mean. She fails to achieve with language what she wants to achieve, and she progressively becomes an isolated and frustrated human being. We see that characters like Catherine are battling to reanimate their existences. They are reduced to a state of frustrated silence, and isolation. The language that Lispector's characters use can neither generate nor receive the messages and codes that they want. They are acutely aware of both this linguistic failure and psychological trauma that stems from it. They become gradually frustrated, and anxious mutes, desperate to communicate but keenly aware that they are unable to do so (Fitz, 1987, p. 428).

## Conclusion

Every family of *Family Ties* looks like an alienated world where solitary people are going through individual suffering. Lispector's characters are typically developed more as "different states of mind" than only flesh and blood, and that is why their pain is viscerally human (Fitz, 1987, p. 429). Most of her characters who become aware of emptiness, a gap that separates them from the region of things often confront nothingness by coming to an awareness of their existence but some of her characters escape into bad faith because they are not capable of taking the responsibility of being free in the world. Common wisdom holds that only love has the restorative power needed to overcome this isolation as Lispector repeatedly shows us that love is a poison as well as tonic. It can be destructive, even ruinous, and may become invisible from hate. Freedom and self-realization, the opportunity to grow, to secure a sense of personal dignity, and to find the courage necessary to act - these are the challenges that Lispector's characters face while cultivating their selves in *Family Ties*.

The despair that all the characters have gone through and at the same time, the spirit that many of them have displayed at the loss of their external sources of value are the necessary price of a greater value and happiness that comes from within. They can take the risk of losing all hope

of external value to seek value within. The theme that true happiness must come from within is one that is familiar to all of us, and it is the key to understanding the existentialist conception of happiness.

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## *The House on Mango Street: Searching for Identity*

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### Abstract

This paper studies a Chicana adolescent Esperanza Cordero's search for a "self" that she believes is essential to come out from the prevailing suppression she observes as a woman and as a Mexican-American. She realizes that to achieve her goal she has to establish herself in the society to eradicate her dependency on anyone. In her quest she has found some symbols that gradually helped her to construct her identity. Her imaginary house where she wishes to be alone to nurture her innate ability of writing is her first step toward her identity. Her name given after her grandmother and the sad past of the namesake is another symbol through which she searches for self-definition. Three skinny trees out of Esperanza's window come as a metaphor of her own position in her father's house and clear her perception about belonging and existence. Esperanza's meeting with three sisters from Mexico serves as a turning point of her life. Their prophesy about Esperanza's future enhances her search and ensures that she is in the right track. The three sisters appear as a fairy godmother for Esperanza and guide her toward her search. Through this "self" searching journey, Esperanza matures as a woman and as a writer.

The search for self-definition is a common theme in coming of age novels, also known as *bildungsroman*. Searching for an identity is also a common cry for all human beings. People tend to search for their identities under different conditions and circumstances. This journey of searching "self" defines a person's actions and nature. This sense of self-definition, or in other words self-identity, is more visible among young people. In some cases this search becomes a struggle among immigrant teenagers who can neither locate themselves in the socio-cultural context of their new location or country nor they can connect emotionally and psychologically to their parents. Through this struggle an adolescent eventually matures and fulfills age quest.

*The House on Mango Street* (1849) by Sandra Cisneros tells us the story of a young girl, Esperanza: the story of her journey towards identity and self-respect. This journey in the novel is narrated in forty-four vignettes the interrelated stories set in a contemporary Latino neighborhood. Each of the stories opens up with new themes, and progresses towards Esperanza's destination. Through this voyage, Esperanza gradually matures as her perception of the socio-cultural context becomes clear and she develops a vision of her own identity that none of the women from her community dare to dream of. In *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Hall (1996) says "identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (p. 112). Esperanza progresses towards constructing her identity with her self-knowledge of past in which she is positioned by, as she knows denying her root will only result in shaping a broken "self" definition.

At a very early age, Esperanza realizes that as a Chicana woman in America she is already double marginalized. The double consciousness of her identity as Mexican-American, the racial tension she experiences, and the male domination she observes, accelerate her desire to establish her own identity as a woman and as a poet. Her craving for her own home, "Not a man's house. Not a daddy's" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 108), is a universal desire of all human beings for freedom and belonging.

The sensibility and feelings the narrator expresses about her relation to the world and people around her confirm her search for identity as a part of coming of age. Esperanza's anxiety of

living in Mango Street is the struggle between what she is and what she wants to be (Sultana, 2012). We come to know that Esperanza's alienation stems from her Mexican ethnicity and hyphenated culture. She experiences cultural abuse; at the same time she is surrounded by defeated and worn-out women of the Mexican American community. However, she wants to free herself from all these barriers. As she reaches adolescence, she gradually discovers the meaning of being a woman and a Mexican in America. At the same time, she also discovers her true self, her desires, and learns that she belongs to herself, to other members of her community. She ultimately finds that writing can make her dreams come true.

Sultana (2012) states that Esperanza's desire for a picture-perfect house originates in her family's wondering nature. She always dreams of a beautiful house with "a great big yard", "running waters and pipe that worked, and "at least three wash rooms" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 4). From the narrator's description it becomes clear that the family's experience of living in rented houses was not good as they had to "share the yard with the people downstairs" (p. 3) and had to be "careful not to make too much noises" (p. 3). Nevertheless, Esperanza does not like the new house. The house her parents bought on Mango Street does not match with the description of the house her parents promised her and her siblings. Indeed, this is the last house they would have liked to live in. She says:

But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath and the house has only one washroom. Everybody has to share a bedroom—Mama and Papa, Carlos and Kiki, Me and Nenny. (Cisneros, 1984, p. 4)

This house is just the opposite of what she has been told they would be getting. This contrast between expectation and reality stimulates Esperanza to construct a house of her own. Eysturoy (2010) says "the narrating "I" becomes aware of her own subjective perceptions as she begins to differentiate between family dreams and social realities and becomes conscious of her parents' inability to fulfill their promises of the perfect house" (p. 62). She was always ashamed of the raggedy houses she lived in and was always worried on what her friends thought about her living standard. Her anxiety was proven true as Esperanza had once been humiliated by a nun from her school where her family was living in a similar house. Sultana (2012) states that as she was asked by the nun about her home, she pointed at their shabby-looking house on the third floor. The nun's immediate reaction then disturbed her. The nun's sarcastic manner of saying "you live *there*" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 5) clearly underscored the poverty-stricken condition of the house. The socio-economic condition of Esperanza's family became apparent to her teachers and classmates. This expression made Esperanza "feel like nothing" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 5). Her parents' new house on Mango Street reminds her about the past humiliation. Blooms (2010) says that the new house threatens her self-perception as to her it becomes a symbol of poverty and shame.

Esperanza does not like the house her parents bought for the family. They try to console their children by saying that this is not the end; it is a "temporary move", "for the time being", (Cisneros, 1984, p. 5) a stop on the way to the dream house. The narrator knows the harsh reality though; Sultana (2012) states that the narrator perceives the notion that her parents could not afford a dream house where grass grows "without a fence" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 4). But the narrator does not give up her dream of attaining the desired house. She would not compromise her dreams and would regain her self-esteem because she is the "grass" on the big yard that grows "without a fence" (p. 4). She believes that she must be true to herself to gain self-respect without support. Her desire to be independent gradually gives birth to her dream house where she believes she would be able to settle down and continue her search for her identity.

Esperanza's search for a house is a search for her identity. When she is ashamed of her house, she is ashamed of herself. In the end Esperanza finds strength to construct her identity and accept Mango Street as a part of her. As she grows up she wants a house where she can have some personal space to write. She has come to identify this space as a source of power. Her search for a perfect home is a step toward constructing her identity.

Esperanza's search for individual identity and freedom is apparent from the very beginning of the novel. Not only does she show her dislike for the house on Mango Street as it does not match her dream house, she also expresses her dissatisfaction with her name. Her friends at school find it funny "as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 11). She wishes to have a fashionable name which her friends would not dare make fun of and be envious. She says, "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do" (Cisneros, 1984, p.11). She wished to have a new name since decoding the meaning of her name would lead her to a new language and cultural context. According to Eysturoy (2010), "Her name is thus a sign of a complex bicultural context that requires her to negotiate among opposing cultural meanings to come to terms with her own self" (p. 66). Her preference for a peculiar name like "Zeze the X" indicates that she wanted a name that carried no contradictory cultural connotation.

Esperanza feels that her name does not match her personality. We come to know that her name represents contradictory meanings in different languages (English and Spanish). Also, the sad past of her namesake depresses her. She is named after her great grandmother who was "a wild horse of a woman" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 11) though she had to spend a lifetime looking out the window, "the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow" (p. 11). This was a kind of revenge she took against her husband's action of throwing "a sack over her head to carry her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier" (p. 11). Throughout her life she could not accept her forceful marriage and failure of "becoming the things" (p. 11) she wanted to be. Though Esperanza gets her great grandmother's name, she does not want to "inherit her place by the window" (p. 11) and end up as a failure. She finds that in English her name means hope but in Spanish it means sadness and waiting. She refuses to be stuck in a sad life, one in which waiting prevails like her great grandmother's. She is a girl who believes in action and searches for ways of attaining freedom and success. That is why she would like to baptize herself under a new name which she believes will allow her to attain self-determination and identity.

The inexperienced and adolescent Esperanza's illusion about having a new fashionable name expresses her dilemma at being caught between her present condition and what she would like to be. Her desire to leave Mango Street in order to have a house of her own becomes clearer in the chapter "Four Skinny Trees". The four skinny trees which are visible from Esperanza's bedroom are metaphors of her condition. They have skinny necks and pointed elbows like the narrator and these "Four raggedy excuses planted by the city" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 74) are symbols of Esperanza's condition in her father's house on Mango Street. Like the trees she doesn't belong here, although she has a physical presence. Skinny trees and hostile environment have been related similarly in Bloom (2010, p.10). She learns the truth of existence from the trees; as she says, "Let one forget his reason for being, they'd all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 74). She comes to know that she has to survive with her feeling of not belonging to reach the place where she belongs. Her alienation creates her desire to find her own home where she could have her real identity and where she could grow up healthy. In her essay "In Search of Identity in Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*" Valdes (2010) says "Esperanza's survival amidst surroundings that are negative and her rejection of her environs is not a denial of

where she is and who she is, but rather a continuous fight to survive in spite of Mango Street as the Esperanza from Mango Street. At a symbolic level the secret of survival is revealed to Esperanza which teaches her to quest for her identity” (p. 61).

Esperanza’s sense of belonging and not belonging gets a new turn when she meets three sisters from Mexico. The three sisters emerge as fairy godmothers to Esperanza. The appearance of the three sisters in the novel serves a special purpose for the heroine. They present a remarkable gift, the gift of self: “When you leave you must remember to come back for the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can’t erase what you know. You can’t forget who you are” (Cisneros, 1984, p 105). The three sisters speak to Esperanza and through their speeches they evoke her spirit of storytelling which ultimately leads her to identity and freedom. Valdes (2010) observes:

At the level of plot the sisters serve as revelation. They are the narrative mediators that enter the story, at the crucial junctures, to assist the heroine in the trail that lies ahead. It is significant that they are from Mexico and appear to be related only to the moon. In pre-Hispanic Mexico, the lunar goddesses, such as Tlazolteotl and Xochiquetzal, were in the intermediaries for all women (Westheim105). They are sisters to each other and, as women sisters to Esperanza. One has laughter like tin, another has the eyes of a cat and the third hands like porcelain. This image is, above all, a lyrical disclosure of revelation. Their entrance into the story is almost magical. At the symbolic level, the three sisters are linked with Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, the three fates. The tradition of the sisters of fate runs deep in Western literature from the most elevated lyric to the popular tale of marriage, birth and the fate awaiting the hero of heroine. In Cisneros’s text, the prophesy of the fates turns to the evocation of self knowledge. (pp. 11-12)

Acquiring self knowledge is crucial for Esperanza as this is a map for her journey towards self construction. The three sisters provide a guideline by reminding her about the power of writing and her sense of responsibility to represent Mango Street.

Like fairy tale godmothers, the three sisters help Esperanza find her identity. They advice her to remember who she is and where she is from since the rejection of her past may lead her away from self-knowledge. Her self-knowledge about her past and present will shape her identity through her storytelling. She is blessed with the power of writing and thus has the opportunity to retell her past. Her power of writing will allow her to find ‘a new identity’, something she is desperate to have. The three sisters understand this quest since they feel “she’s special” (Cisneros 1984, p. 104) and guide her to the right way by stressing the importance of self-knowledge. However, their prophesy, “yes, she’ll go very far” (p. 103) will come true when she will be able to retell her past and with her metaphoric return to Mango Street, where she is positioned by her past.

The word ‘house’ has a specific resonance for Esperanza. To her a house is not only a place to live in, eat, and sleep, but a place to belong and to bloom. We come across constant comparisons between the house on the Mango Street where she lives and her dream house. Valdes (2010) observes –

The imagery of the house is in a constant flux between a negative and a positive, between the house the narrator has and the one she would like to have. On the level of the narrative voice’s sense of belonging and identity, it is clear from the first place that the house is much more than a place to live. It is a reflection, an extension, a personified world that is indistinguishable from the occupant” (p. 12)

Esperanza conceptualizes house as a self reflecting space. Thus her journey towards constructing self-identity and search for a perfect house are inseparable.

Esperanza's dream house becomes the extension of her own persona. She deliberately denies the existence of her present house to one of her friends and reveals to her that she never developed any feeling of belonging for the house:

No, this isn't my house I say and shake my head as if shaking could undo the year I've lived here. I don't belong. I don't even want to come from here..... I never had a house, not even a photograph... only one I dream of. (Cisneros, 1984, p. 106)

She knows that she does not belong to the hostile ugly world she lives in. Her rejection of the house on Mango Street is a rejection of social confinement and cultural hostility.

Her dream house is the projection of her idea about being a "self". This is a place where she can belong freely, having no patriarchal domination, no sexual harassment, no racial marginalization and no class conflict. Initially, her dream house appeared in the story with its lucrative external features. She thought that would save her from social humiliation of her parents' inability to belong to a much accepted social class. She wants "a house on a hill like the ones with the gardens" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 86) where her father works. She used to visit the house on holidays but now she feels ashamed to go there since she understands the harsh reality of their economic and social condition that would never allow them to possess a house like that one. She explains her disappointment by saying "all of us staring out the window like the hungry. I am tired of looking at what we can't have" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 86). Her expression of disappointment that they "can't have" a luxurious house signifies her deep understanding regarding the socio-economic and socio-cultural fact that being a part of a marginalized community she can only dream of such a house but will never be allowed to possess one.

Still, she is optimistic about having her own house where she will offer 'Bums' (vagabonds) a place to come in and stay. She describes her dream house as a place of wish- fulfillment. The chapter "A House of My Own" expands the threshold of the promised house of her dream, evoking Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* intertextually. Esperanza feels as she grows up that the interior of the house is more important than the exterior: "Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 108). Her description of the dream house changes at the end of the novel and she describes her dream house not as a luxurious one with gardens on the hills but a place where her "pretty purple petunias", "two shoes waiting beside the bed", and her "books and stories" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 108) invite her to write down her unwritten stories. Valdes (2010) says "the house is now a metaphor for the subject and, the personal space of her identity" (p. 12). The described house is the symbol of her self-defined identity where Esperanza can discover her power of writing.

Symbolically, Esperanza's dream house personifies her existence. This is the house she wants to belong and settle down. But the problem is that the rejection of her presence in Mango Street will be the rejection of herself and of her identity. Hall (1996) says that cultural identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (p. 12). Her identity will gain strength when she will learn to retell her past through the act of writing since her future identity of 'being' depends on her past, that is to say, her ethnic root. Her power of writing will help her gain control over her gloomy past and will create a future where she will be free and to which she can belong. Valdes (2010) says "Mango Street will always be part of this woman, but she has taken the strength of trees unto herself and has found the courage to be the house of her dreams, her own self- invention" (p. 15). As a Mexican American, her lesson of survival and winning freedom to achieve her self-defined identity through writing is to progress towards nonconformity and to protest against mainstream culture and patriarchal narration.

Her protest against the orthodox accelerates her search for her own self and helps her find her identity. The three different elements of her life: her father's ragged house, her name with conflicting meanings in different languages, and her realization about belongingness and existence through observation (three skinny trees), are the passage to her identity. Her search for identity and "self" comes to an end as she gains control over her power of writing and representation. The capacity of writing helps her belong to her bittersweet past in Mango Street as well as allows her to belong to the present and hope for a better future.

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# Undergraduates' Novel Experiences with Massive Open Online Courses

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## Abstract

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) have revolutionized e-learning contexts through improvising new technology on its pedagogical features. Recently, much debate has been directed to the application of MOOCs in relation to higher education. However, research regarding students' experiences of MOOCs is scant. Therefore, the present study aims to fill in the gap by examining undergraduates experiences with MOOCs. Data were collected from 29 undergraduates attending various degree programs at a public university in Malaysia. Undergraduates' logbook notes were used for collecting data for this study. Results showed that most of the participants expressed positive attitudes towards learning in the MOOC. They valued the MOOC instructional features and tools and showed strong satisfaction in learning in the MOOCs environment. The empirical findings of the study have contributed to a better understanding of the nature of learning and participation in a MOOC environment from the perspective of undergraduate students.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have succeeded to create massive attention among educators, researchers, students, media, and stakeholders as elite universities from developed countries formed consortia to offer free courses on various disciplines. MOOC started with the promises to offer free education for all (Kop, Fournier, & Mak, 2011). A few number of commercial start-ups such as Udacity, Edx, Futurelearn and Coursera have been launched in collaboration with leading universities to deliver free courses online for massive participation. Many academic institutions, especially those in North America such as Duke University, Harvard University, MIT, and Stanford University have been offering courses in cooperation with MOOC providers. Big commercial institutions such as Google and Pearson are also planning to contribute to higher education by adopting MOOC instructional format (Yuan, Powell, & CETIS, 2013). While MOOCs are mushrooming in higher education, empirical research in the area is still very limited. Therefore, the present study aims to contribute some effort to this gap by scanning a small group of tertiary level students' novel experiences with MOOC instructional features. The following part of the study deals with the background of the development of MOOC and its theoretical underpinnings.

## Background of MOOC

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are online courses with massive participations that promise free education for all (Daniel, 2013; Kop et al., 2011; Fini, 2009). The idea of MOOC was inspired by the open educational resources (OER) movement, which aims to provide learning and teaching materials for free (Kop et al., 2011). OER movement initiates to curb the commodification of knowledge and deliver an alternative route of learning and teaching resources for enhancement of educational paradigm (Kauppinen, 2013). The term MOOC was first articulated by Dave Cormier in 2008 during a course called "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge (Rodriguez, 2013). However, MOOC gets its popularity in 2012 when New York Times referred 2012 as "the year of the MOOC" as several well-financed providers associated with top universities emerged, including Coursera, Udacity, and edX (Pappano, 2012).

Typically most MOOCs contain a series of video lectures, quizzes, and assignments (Pappano, 2012; Malliga, 2013). EdX, Coursera, Udacity and Futurelearn are few of the popular online platforms that host MOOCs. Each platform offers its own course features, software, and business model. For example, Coursera and Udacity are two for-profit organizations whereas edX is a non-profit organization that has made the core code of the platform as open source (Sandeen, 2013). Additional features of MOOCs include that they typically have no fee for participation, require no pre-requisites, and do not offer formal credit for participation (Adamopoulos, 2013; McAuley, Stewart, Siemens, & Cormier, 2010). However, on the 6th of September, 2012, Colorado State University announced plans to offer academic credit that is transferable toward a degree with completion of a free Udacity computer science MOOC (Mangan, 2012). At present, MOOCs providers work with a number of higher education institutions offer courses in social science, computer-science, mathematics, business, engineering, humanities, medicine, biology, physics, and other subjects (Malliga, 2013).

### MOOC Providers

There are more than 16 MOOC providers offering courses on various disciplines in collaboration with well-known institutions around the world. Coursera, Udacity and edX are the three major MOOC providers who are offering courses in collaboration with prestigious universities such as Stanford, MIT, Duke, and Harvard. Coursera, a for-profit educational technology company initiated by Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller from Stanford University, is the leading MOOC provider offering 959 courses on various disciplines in collaboration with 118 elite institutions having more than 10 million users (Coursera, 2015) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Coursera

Founder (s)	Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller
Users	11,572,029 Courserians (19 February, 2015)
Website	www.coursera.org
Courses available in	English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese, Turkish, Ukrainian, Hebrew, German, Italian, Portuguese
Launched	April 2012
No of courses	959
Partner Universities	118 institutions

### Reviewed Literature

There is currently limited information available on participants' perceptions of MOOCs (Murray, 2014). Thus, Murray (2014) initiates a study at the University of Edinburg to examine perceptions of a group of MOOC learners who participated in a course named Equine Nutrition. A self-completion survey consisting of series of question (Likert scale) was administered to find out the learners' general perception towards MOOCs. The participants of Murray's study highly appreciated and rated the course features positively. However, Murray (2014) recommended further studies on the lack of interaction that exists in the MOOC environment.

Another researcher, Veletsianos (2013) expressed similar ideas that current conversations around educational innovations in general and MOOCs in particular, lack learners' voices. His e-book entitled *Learner Experiences with MOOCs and Open Online Learning*, where several MOOC learners functioned as authors, described and reflected upon the learning experiences, thus contributing to

better understanding of MOOCs. The reported studies show a mixed perception from learners' who participated in the MOOCs. For example, Ramirez (2013) claimed that the MOOC was a valuable learning experience and it did not present too many challenges. The peer-to-peer interaction had supported student-centered learning. On the other hand, Ota (2013) commented on the MOOC instructional design, and he suggested that MOOC providers should revise the courses in the ways the course content was delivered. He added that the greatest departure from good instructional design practice found in the MOOC was in the questions and assessments. Moreover, the design of the video lectures and text-based materials failed to engage learners with the course content. However, Ota (2013) did not provide any suggestion that could enhance learning engagement with the course.

A few empirical studies have shed light on learners' learning experience and engagement with MOOC. For example, Milligan, Littlejohn, & Margaryan (2013) investigated learners' patterns of engagement in a cMOOC course titled *Change11* which was a large-scale cMOOC starting from September 2011 to May 2011. Their study identified three types of learners: active participants, passive participants, and lurkers. The study concludes that different learners have different learning strategies and styles while attending MOOCs. Milligan et al. (2013) added that learners' patterns of engagement in the CCK2011 cMOOC were affected by multiple factors including student confidence with technology, prior experience with a cMOOC, and motivation. Hill (2013) added another type of learners which he called "drop-ins": learners who are active participants but only for a selected topic or discussion. Not all MOOC learners are serious learners because some of them browse through MOOCs out of curiosity (Kizilcec, Piech, & Schneider, 2013). Thus, the completion rate of MOOCs average fewer than 10% (Jordan, 2013), with Coursera courses reporting closer to 5% (Koller, Ng, Do, Chen, 2013). Koller et al. (2013) differentiated "committed learners" from students who only browse courses. They further sub-grouped the "committed learners" into three levels: active participants, passive participants, and community contributors. Active participants are "course completers" who are engaged in all course contents of the MOOC whereas passive participants engage only with watching video lectures, attempt a few assignments, and have limited forum participation, while community contributors are those active participants who produce new content such as through discussion forum.

The educational benefits of MOOCs have been appreciated by many academics, yet the idea has not been researched adequately in higher education contexts. So far, a few empirical studies have documented learners learning experience with this new form of education. However, very few researchers have sought to provide a deep, qualitative, and multidimensional understanding of learner experiences in MOOC especially in higher education contexts. In meeting such a gap and need, the present case study was designed to examine undergraduate' learning experience in a MOOC environment. More specifically, it investigated how the participants perceived MOOCs, and what they liked or did not like about MOOCs.

### **Theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the concept MOOC**

Most of the MOOCs are based on connectivist theory which emphasizes that learning and knowledge emerge from a network of connections (Kop et al., 2011; Rodriguez, 2013). Connectivist learning theory sees learning as the process of creating connections and elaborating a network (Kop & Hill, 2008; Rodrigues, 2013). MOOCs providers such as edx, Udacity, and Coursera offer courses in a more traditional way, a centralized approach (sometimes called xMOOCs) (Kop & Hill, 2008).

Two very different formats of massive open online courses are cMOOCs and x-MOOCs (Kop & Hill, 2008). Their pedagogical foundations and the different ways in which social interactions happen during the courses sets them apart. cMOOCs emphasize connectivist pedagogy

while x-MOOC into the cognitive-behaviorist pedagogy (Rodriguez, 2013). x-MOOCs capture a more traditional approach to learning with video recorded lectures, online quizzes, and weekly assignments and are based on an instructor-centric instructional design that establishes a one-to-many relationship to reach massive numbers (Siemens, 2012). On the other hand, in c-MOOCs, the learners' autonomy, peer-to-peer learning and social networking are emphasized. In x-MOOCs a professor takes the lead and the learning-experience is organized top-down. However, some x-MOOCs seem to adopt a more blended approach incorporating both cMOOC and x-MOOC pedagogy.

### Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate undergraduates' first experiences with MOOCs. The research design was qualitative in nature and adheres to the exploratory case study strategy. The target population of this study consisted of 29 undergraduates coming from different disciplines from a public university in Malaysia. Participants were asked to attend a course from any MOOC platform. Twenty-nine undergraduates registered for 14 MOOC courses from Coursera (see Table 2). The duration of each course ranges from five weeks to thirteen weeks long.

**Table 2: Name of the course, name of the university offered those courses, number of student registered in each course**

SL No	Name of the Courses	Name of the University	No. of students registered
1.	An Introduction to Interactive Programming in Python	Rice University	3
2.	Democratic Development	Stanford University	1
3.	Science, Technology, and Society in China II	The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	6
4.	Child Nutrition and Cooking	Stanford University	1
5.	Grow to Greatness: Smart Growth for Private Businesses	University of Virginia	1
6.	Healthcare Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Duke University	1
7.	Introduction to Psychology as a Science	Georgia Institute of Technology	2
8.	Introduction to Guitar	Berklee College of Music	2
9.	Sports and Society	Duke University	3
10.	Citizenship and U.S. Immigration	Emory University	1
11.	Crafting an Effective Writer: Tools of the Trade	Mt. San Jacinto College	1
12.	Community Change in Public Health	Johns Hopkins University	2
13.	History of Rock, Part One	University of Rochester	3
14.	Introduction to Music Production	Berklee College of Music	2

To collect data regarding students' experiences of MOOC, the researcher used a logbook. Participants were asked to pen their daily activities into logbook each time they logged into the courses. They were also asked to discuss the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the MOOC

course they have experienced. For strengths, participants tended to focus on the features and tools of MOOC that helped them with the learning process. For weaknesses, the students tended to focus on the difficulties they have experienced with MOOC instructional model. Moreover, participants were asked to pen the reason for attending the course they have taken. The study translated/transcribed 29 logbooks (reflection notes). Each transcribed logbook was reviewed and coded manually to discover participants' attitudes and perceptions toward learning in the MOOC environment. The study counted the recorded themes, repeated words, patterns, and positive or negative attitudes toward MOOC, centering on the details in the logbook notes. Recurring themes were identified when a student repeated the same words, phrases, or sentences several times as well as negative or positive reactions to each aspect of the learning process. Then the recurring themes of each student were compared with those of the other students' logbooks.

## Result

The study retrieved many themes after analyzing students' logbooks. The themes are categorized in two main areas: significant challenges and the perceived advantages of the MOOCs instructional design. Out of 29 students, 19 were female and 10 were male from a public university in Malaysia who registered for 14 courses from Coursera, the leading MOOC provider. Students penned the reason for attending MOOCs at the beginning in their logbooks. They also noted some of the facts in their logbooks such as daily tasks completed, skill learned daily, significant challenges and their perceived advantages of the features and the format of the course. Participants wrote about their daily activities, on some MOOCs features and tools such as watching video lectures, taking quizzes, writing assignment, evaluating peers' assignment, contributing to the discussion forums, problems encountered, and perceived advantages.

Almost all of the participants' initial reactions were positive about the MOOC's instructional system. Students greatly appreciated the flexibilities and convenience of the course tools. Everyone was comfortable with sharing and posting class-related materials online, and they valued the learning opportunity inherent in peer feedback. Students' responses were found to be positive about the MOOC instructional design; however, they also reflected various difficulties they faced with MOOC.

The reason that attracted undergraduates to enroll in MOOC is that most of the courses were offered by highly prestigious universities from North America (Participants 4, 7, & 10). Participant (7) commented that "I never thought of attending a lecture of a professor from Stanford University. I would like to thanks Coursera and partnered universities for offering such courses and make my dream come true." In some cases, participants did not care whether they could complete a MOOC or get a completion certificate. Instead, they sought to develop their understanding and basic knowledge of a particular topic. . Participant (10) stated that:

"I just want to learn the basic rules of Java without doing any quizzes and assignments and participating in discussions. I learn it not because I am interested in it but I need to use it. So I just watch the lectures and get a general understanding of Java".

In addition, MOOCs helped students explore and discover fields not related to their college majors. MOOC helps students to become expert in fields, which might not be related to their academic fields. Participant (13) mentioned that:

I chose this course *Introduction to Guitar* because I was always interested to play music especially with the string instruments. Although I know how to play a guitar practically, guitar theory is still an important thing to learn in order to be a good guitarist. So, I took

this advantage to learn to play guitar theoretically since I am into it. Hopefully by choosing this course, I will be able to be a better guitarist in the future.

Participant (7) stated that:

“I have my Bachelor degree in English language. I was interested in Music and wanted to be a musician. MOOC provides me that opportunity by offering a course on How to play Guitar which helped me to develop my knowledge on playing guitar. I would like to thank Coursera for offering courses on Music.”

Participant (19), who took the course *Science, Technology, and Society in China*, stated that “I choose this course because I am interested to know about the growing technology in China and how it develops.” Two other students (Participants 14 & 23) took the same course because the duration of the course is four weeks long. A student attended the course *Healthcare Innovation and Entrepreneurship* added that “I choose this course because I would like to explore more about innovation and entrepreneurship regarding healthcare. Besides, the course only takes 6 weeks to complete”.

Massive participation is another reason that students highlighted to be a motivating factor to join such a big classroom (Participant 3, 5, 11). Finally, getting a MOOC certificate from a prestigious university is another reason for their enrolment and curiosity to find out what MOOC is. In addition, students also mentioned some other possible reasons for enrolling in the MOOC i.e., free of charge, flexibility of schedule, and interaction with others worldwide.

### Students' reflection on MOOC instructional design

All MOOC platforms exhibit some common characteristics such as massive participation, online and open access, formatted and short video lectures (5-15 min.), quizzes, live workshop, peer and/or automated assessment and forum for peer support and discussion. Participants of the study liked the MOOC platforms, its features and tools.

Student logbook entries frequently mentioned the benefits of watching the video lectures. Participant (8) claimed that it became easier for him to understand the lectures of the professor because of the embedded subtitles on the videos. Participant (6) added that the “videos are so handy that I can download the videos and listen to the lectures anytime, anywhere”. “The videos are designed in such a way that I really did feel like I was in class with some other students, listening and watching” added by Participant (23). In addition, each video lecture included several stops where students were prompted to answer a multiple choice question. Participant (17) opined “at first I found the embedded questions in the video annoying; they interrupted my listening. In time, I came to realize that they confirmed my understanding of the key ideas of the subject.” Some students also wrote about their success in the quizzes and assignments. Another student (Participant 24) added “I have achieved the highest score in week two quiz. It was quite difficult but after watching the video lectures again I was able to score 10 out of 12.”

In relation to the discussion forum, the participants endorsed in their logbooks that the discussion forum had facilitated their interest to discuss various topics. They also highlighted some key issues. For example, one of the positive aspects of the discussion forum was that it allowed them to get many responses from their peers. They commented that the questions were good and the responses were found to be thoughtful, supportive and fun to read. In the same light, Participant 14 commented that “the forum part is the best part of MOOC. We can exchange our opinion on a topic. There are so many topics inside the discussion forum.” However, a few participants could not contribute much in the forum; they could only introduce themselves there. One student

(Participant 20) penned that “I couldn’t contribute anything on the discussion forum because I was busy with other activities such as doing the quizzes and assignment, evaluating peers’ assignment and watching the videos.” She added that she read many thoughtful comments posted by other students. Participant (21), who attended the course *Rock and Music*, commented, “The forum part is the best part of MOOC. We can exchange our opinion on Rock and Music and so on. There are so many topics inside the discussion forum”.

### Significant challenges

Despite the advantages of the video lectures, students faced some difficulties while downloading, streaming, and watching the videos due to Internet speed (Participants 4, 7, 11, 12). “Basically, the challenge is the slow Internet connection of the university. It prevents me from learning the course smoothly as the course videos are lagged” (Participant 11). Some students revealed few difficulties with quizzes that in some of the quizzes, they got one attempt and in other quizzes they could take multiple attempts to complete the quizzes. Course designer should state the number of attempt students will get in each quiz. The instructions and rubric should be clearly mentioned for each item of the course.

Participant (4) added that the significant challenge for him was to manage his time for the course, as he had to watch videos of approximately 10 to 15 minutes each (sometimes around 20 minutes), take quizzes, complete assignments and evaluate the peers’ papers. Participant (9) added that “challenges that I had to face while attending this course was that I had to really put my time in a very tight consideration due to my preparation for final year project. Another challenge was that I had to complete two sets of video lecture, quizzes, mini project and peer evaluation for this course”. Out of twenty nine students only three students managed to complete the MOOC successfully and achieved the course completion certificate. These three students attended the same course *Science, Technology and Society in China1: Basic Concepts*. Another difficulty for students was to understand the lecture and different terms of the course they followed. “Another challenge is to understand the scientific terms in the lectures, since I have left out with sciences after my Form 5” was added by Participant (8).

Evaluating peer’s essay is yet another significant challenge the participants faced while participating in the MOOC. Participant 10 commented that “in my opinion, the weakness of this course is that it lets the students give marks by evaluating other students’ assignments; evaluation marks from peers contribute to the overall marks.” Similarly, Participant (13) added that “the evaluation procedures are more difficult than doing an assignment because evaluating peer’s essay requires more time and thoughts than completing an assignment.” However, some of the participants (Participants 3, 4, and 16) commented positively towards peer assessment adding that giving feedback to peers had many advantages such as opportunities to develop their ability to give constructive feedback, getting advice on their drafts, having a broader audience for their written work, and learning from different approaches other students applied in responding to an essay.

### Discussion

To recapitulate, the present study investigated how a class of undergraduates perceived the MOOC, what they liked or did not like about the courses, how they learned, and what helped them learn. The results from the logbooks showed that many of the participants had positive views toward learning from the MOOCs. They enjoyed the learning, and valued the instructional features and tools. The study revealed that participants appreciated the MOOC instructional system, and the flexibility as well as convenience of the MOOCs’ features. They liked to post

course-related materials online, participate in quizzes, do assignments and watch video lectures. However, they did not feel comfortable with the peer evaluation system. The certificate of accomplishment is another aspect that the participants discussed in their logbooks. MOOCs have the benefit of offering certificates that the participants can use to document professional development or for other uses. Participants of this study who received certificate of accomplishment were found to be excited. However, the question is that if a student completed a MOOC course successfully and received an accomplishment certificate from the organization offering this MOOC, will this certificate be of any value when he/she would apply for a job? Coursera is working with American Council of Education (ACE) to ensure that credits that come from the Signature Track program will be honored by many of ACE's member school such as Amherst University, Boston University, Carnegie Mellon and many others (Gidwani, 2013). Since certificate has a value, however, we cannot ignore the fact that taking a course certainly has inherent value.

MOOCs like Coursera have adopted 'peer assessments' in which students rate each other's work independently (Coursera, 2015). Multiple peer assessments could be performed for each student's work. The participants of both studies questioned about the reliability and validity of peer assessment because they felt that the MOOC learners did not have the expertise or experience to provide accurate and quality feedback to their peers' essays. Assessing such higher-level thoughts in the essays requires human experts and formal evaluation or examination (Sharples et al., 2012). Because there are arguments for and against peer assessments, Sharples et al. (2012) opine that peer assessment is simply an aid to the learning process, but might not be a means of evaluating the learning outcomes.

The design of a MOOC platform is based on a sound pedagogical foundation that aims to help students learn the material quickly and effectively. Hanley (2013) stated that massive participation, open access, formatted and short video lecture, quizzes, forum, and peer assessment are such distinctive features that support learning. A short form of video lecture may engage a sense of belonging and commitment (Bruff, Fisher, Mcewen, & Smith, 2013; Hanley, 2013). In a MOOC discussion forum, learners ask questions, exchange ideas about the course content, and get to know fellow students. Participants of the Writing MOOC were involved in various kinds of networking and community-oriented activities. However, some participants reported difficulties organizing their own learning activities in the MOOC; especially difficult was for learners to track the discussion in the discussion forum. In MOOCs, organizing learning and managing resources require a great deal of autonomy and self-organization (Mackness, Mak, & Williams, 2010). Keeping up with the readings, maintaining interactions with others, creating and sharing materials, and engaging fully in the activities is challenging for many participants. The volume of information flowing in the MOOC can also be disorienting and daunting (McAuley et al., 2010). Learning in the MOOC is reported to be quite overwhelming especially for students expecting instructional processes similar to those of traditional models of higher education.

## Conclusion

The finding of the present study is strongly encouraging. Results of the study highlight some motivational factors of MOOC that might promote learning on various course disciplines. The participants of the study appreciated the MOOCs' instructional methods as well as mentioned few problems that they faced while attending the MOOCs. Students enjoyed watching the videos, attending the quizzes, participating in the discussion forum as well as MOOC's certifications. They also penned problems that hampered their learning were slow streaming of the videos, doing the assignment on time, and evaluating the peers' assignments as were time consuming. By examining undergraduates' learning experience with MOOCs the study opens the

doors of e-learning learning researches and practices. The study contributes to the field of e-learning by drawing instructors', researchers', educators' and learners' attention to a new form of online education namely massive open online course (MOOC). Although the practicality of this educational model is generally accepted by people, there is still some fundamental doubt that this educational model will actually be useful in helping students gain a command of particular skill. The limitation of the study is that of small sample size which might not examine the data at a finer level. Nevertheless, some valuable findings have been found, and some issues such as peer assessment and interaction warrant further research.

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# The Urge for 'X-treme': Super-Human Syndrome Followed by the Morality of Viciousness

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## Abstract

X-treme is considered to be a new popular phenomenon which brings out the hidden fantasy of any normal human being, to test every possible limitation till the ultimate extent. Though the practice of extreme is considered as villainous and not easily acceptable by the society, it is the human fantasy to go to X-treme in order to be included in the minority of being superhuman. In our postmodern world aesthetics get more priority than ethics when media visualize the inner fantasy of violence in reality as a spectacle for the audience. This media increases the urge of being superhuman, while being human is too cliché. Now, X-treme has become so important to bring every possible limit out of people that they do not bother whether it is related to morality or not. It is obvious to find a superhero against the features of postmodernism because he is unmovable from the fixed convention of being good and not allowing the X-treme. That morality makes a superhero limited and stereotyped with all cliché traits of being inside the boundary. On the other hand, villains or anti-hero can possess the X-treme power and exhibit the extremity desired by the audience. So, villains are more appreciable than heroes because they become the example of living larger than life in this lifetime. The clean line of being good or bad is dead – thanks to postmodernism which justifies the practice of going to every possible limit of X-treme. When the postmodern ethics is already compromised, a new kind of ethics emerges in human mind. That ethics is more than personal which does not bother to maintain the universal ethics that is predetermined or enforced social ideology and silences the moral impulse of the individuals. When that personal ethics might also be the result of the enforced ideology, a free mind can create its own morality by stepping out of the influence of any kind of social ideology.

Key Words: X-treme, superhuman syndrome, post-humanism, superhero, supervillain, postmodern ethics, cyborg, fantasy, normality, individuality, consumer society.

## Introduction

By definition, the extreme limit of the “possible” is that point where, despite the unintelligible position which it has for him in being, man, having stripped himself of enticement and fear, advances so far that one cannot conceive of the possibility of going further. (Bataille, 1988, p. 39)

This definition of extreme suggests the possible limit of going to a level from where there is no possibility of going further. When people find no meaning in remaining under the rules and regulation of the society, he moves further to achieve something to satisfy his desire of testing every possible limit. Being human is not enough anymore when everyone is tempted by the media to be different than any other person in every way. When everyone around us seems to be normal human being, the extremists search for a space where they can be more than human; because that will make them superior than the human kind. This can be considered to another level of 'X-treme' desire to be extreme. According to Boothroyd (2006), extreme is a widely used cultural phenomena and it brings the most popular cool shorthand 'X-treme' which is conceptualized in consumerism to instigate a widespread fascination and obsession with everything that is extreme (p. 277). On the other hand, superhuman and superheroes possess “some extraordinary capability or skill” which usually exceeds “physical and perceptual abilities of people” who are both deemed

and represented normal (Johnson, Leah, & Freeman, 2013, p. 230). This urge of 'X-treme' is generally triggered by superheroes and it creates an unsatisfactory desire inside normal human being to get out of the territory of normalcy and reach to the highest peak of extremity. It eventually activates the need of being superior by possessing those refined and extraordinary abilities. With the word 'superhuman syndrome', this paper suggests an anxiety or obsession of being exceedingly more than any normal human being. This paper discusses that when people try to reach somewhere beyond their normal capacity as a human it becomes an obsession which can put them in a situation where they do not bother about being right or wrong; hero or villain.

### Superhuman Syndrome to Post-humanism

This section combines the two words 'super' and 'human' to explain the urge to become superhuman which takes human towards post-humanism. While being only human is not enough, they feel the inferiority of having no extraordinary quality or power as a normal human being. And this kind of anxiety or inferiority among the mass is created by the media by representing these examples of superheroes with X-treme power. They start to believe that their desire is not impossible when they are introduced with someone in the media who can have superhuman power without having any supernatural power. In that case Batman can be the perfect example who turned towards post-humanism without having alien power like Superman. He did not need to be superhuman. He enhanced himself with the help of technologies which enabled him to possess extraordinary powers and skills that took him to X-treme. He exceeded from the state of being normal by being a 'cyborg' with the help of technologies.

As Fowler (2009) said,

Batman captures our imagination because he is an uncommon superhero. His methods don't conform to established practices. The Caped Crusader is incorruptible but no choir-boy. For example, Batman uses enhanced interrogation techniques and global cell phone taps in *The Dark Knight*, the latest Batman movie from Warner Bros. Pictures. He lives somewhat on the dark side. What's more, he possesses no super-human powers. Yet Batman effectively fights chaos and crises with a commitment to the ultimate good of society. (p. 10)

He captures our imagination more than any other superhero because in him we see the possibility of being a superhuman with the help of technologies. Any normal human being can be superhero when we are living in a post-human era. We can consider Donna Haraway's concept explained by Lauro & Embry (2008), "becoming cyborg is not purely a material experience but involves a discursive transformation: we become cyborgs when we decide to be cyborgs" (p. 105). People find it more possible to fulfill their imagination into reality. This endorsing attitude towards post-humanism makes it possible to possess the power that could let someone to exceed the human capacity and establish himself/herself as more than human or 'super'. On the other hand, this state of being more than human through the help of technologies can be seen from Donna Haraway's (1999) proposition of a post gendered world where both the 'god' and 'goddess' are dead when people can deem for something more reliable than God which she mentioned as cyborg (p. 282). Through the help of technology people can blur the difference between man and women which is more liberal. So, people can become more able by being cyborg instead of having some limitations in their physicality. In most contemporary science fiction or superhero novels or movies, we can easily notice countless characters who go through technological enhancement which makes them more powerful than any ordinary hero to fight against the odd. To add to this, Ironman can be brought here, who is a 'cyborg' by choice. Being cyborg did not make him disabled rather it increased his power through his suits.

## Imposed Normalcy: Easier than the Fear of Extremity

It is the urge of every human to be more than human which is not possible if they live under a dominated limitation. In Patrick D. Hopkins's (2009) essay, "The Lure of the Normal: Who Wouldn't Want to Be a Mutant?" he brought this argument that who would want to be ordinary? (p. 5). He brings a disagreement about being 'normal' and asked,

Is it true that just because something is normal, it should be our goal, our yardstick for how things should be? Does normality give us any guidelines? Or, is "normal" merely the way things statistically happen to be? And can we think of ways to make things much better? (p. 6)

It might seem logical to be normal and act as we should act under the law and ideology of our society. But does this make things better for us if we cannot think out of that normality? People has the right to think above their limitation of biological power and when they do, they can think of additional attachments like science, technology and knowledge which makes them different from any other normal human being. Being a minority, this might seem like a curse to others but who does not want to test the X-treme power even after being a minority? So, it might give them guideline to achieve something by getting out of the comfort zone to be the super-human.

According to Kavadlo (2009), "If Superman is a wish, then the X-Men represent what Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) understood to be every wish's flipside: fear" (p. 44). Everyone would want to be a superhero with extreme power and superhero films are made for people to fantasize about them. It suggests the same thing what is proven in the previous chapter that, it is normal to see a superhero with X-treme power even if he wears ridiculous cloth. But it cannot be taken normally if anyone in real life exposes the X-treme power. It will terrify the society. Just like that, in the X-Men film, there were some human who were in the side of mutants to support them and others were afraid of them. The fear is their desire to be Superman because, every single person is not allowed to have powers like those mutants in X-Men film otherwise it will become available or possible for everyone. Without the mask these X-Men are the reminder of being a normal human being and they seem closer to reality than the Superman. In fact, they tend to take superheroes normally when they find something out of the concept of reality. But the truth is in front of us when Superman exhibits his red undergarment upon his costume which makes him ridiculous but at the same time different from others, this indicates his not being normal like others. His cloth defines his identity about being extra-ordinary; otherwise superheroes did not have to take shelter under these ridiculous costumes. On the other hand, the new version of Superman in the film *Man of Steel* (2013), does not exhibit this kind of X-treme clothing. So, superheroes need mask to hide their true identity so that everyone can idealize them as symbol but never attempt to compare a normal human being with X-treme power. As if going for the X-treme is only allowed for superheroes.

## Private or Public Fantasy?

Todd McGowan's (2007) book explains the film theory of psychoanalysis where he suggests that, for psychoanalysis, fantasy is an imaginary scenario that fills in the gaps within ideology and creates a way for the individual to imagine a path out of the dissatisfaction produced by the demands of social existence (p.23). Fantasy creates an opening to the impossible or inaccessible enjoyment by distorting social reality through an imaginative act and films help to translate private fantasies into public which creates dissatisfaction inside the audience (McGowan, 2007, p. 24). From this perspective it is customary for any normal human being to fantasize about superheroes or feel the necessity of dissatisfaction to go to X-treme like them. Their inner urge to go to

X-treme to be the superhuman seems possible for them through this fantasy. Their fantasy of becoming superhuman comes true through these superhero films which can satisfy their dissatisfaction created by the same media which created the masochistic urge inside them. But in Žižek's (1997) concept, our fantasy cannot be free from ideology. That is the reason why people like to fantasize the superhero who serves from the same side of the society and it is inside every human that they cannot break the rules of society. So, a superhero is not questioned when he ultimately uses his superpower to fight the odds but a normal person would be questioned if he tries to test his possible limits by not being a superhero.

### Upholding the Structure of Ideology

Herman (2013) said that, the relationship between ideology and myth can be found within the Superhero narrative (p. 10). As superhero narrative is inspired by myth, it combines all the structures of mythical ideology. In Roland Barthes's (1993) concept, we always understand the 'Sign' which bears the meaning of ultimate ideology and this meaning is already established by the practice of myth in every culture. There is always a hidden politics inside the ultimate message because message is not free from knowledge of discourse. Barthes followed the theory of Saussure which explains the way language and parole works. In the same way superhero myth making works and that is, everybody believes that, they cannot be bad even if they have X-treme powers (p. 115). They will always follow the social norms by being the savior and always doing the right thing. In the film, *The Dark Knight* (2008) the 'Joker' says to Batman, "This is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. You truly are incorruptible, aren't you?" (Nolan, Roven, Thomas, & Nolan, 2008, 2:13:31). Here, 'Joker' compares himself with Batman who is an immovable object, while the 'Joker' being a villain is the unstoppable force. This is where extremity of a villain finds the limitation in a superhero that can never change the sign of goodness inside a superhero. Even he could not let any other hero cross that line and go to X-treme. In this film, Harvey Dent wanted to kill a schizophrenic who worked for Joker but Batman did not let the bad come out of him. He controlled the extremity inside a hero, because according to the social norm a hero cannot go to X-treme. According to Batman, "Gotham needs a hero with a face" (Nolan et al., 2008, 46:5). Without wearing a mask Harvey could be that hero who would show the example of being good. Batman wanted to inspire people by being the symbol and anyone can be the symbol. That concept made it available to everyone that they can also become Batman. After all he does not have any supernatural power. But he could not let any normal human being be the Batman. In this film at the beginning some people were seen to copy the clothing of Batman to save the world, which he did not like. He could not let any other human being go to X-treme because that will be against the law or rules of society. That is why he wanted Harvey to be the example who could inspire people to be like a hero by not going to X-treme.

Instead of having X-treme power superheroes cannot surrender to the total extremity while supervillains can. There is a reason behind it and the reason is clear in front of us that is, ethics and morality which are considered to be the essential part of a superhero. They cannot entirely go to X-treme otherwise people will learn to practice the negativity from them. The storylines of the battle between good and bad feed off the ideal rule of 'Sign', that good will win over evil. To establish the continuation of this mythology, the hero is saved at the end by having the victory of killing the villain. To show the good's triumph over evil the final result has to be destructive and severely punishable for the evil. That is why every time the death or punishment of the villain is shown devastatingly. No matter how powerful or immortal a supervillain is, the ultimate result will leave him to tragedy. If this rule of demolishing the evil is not shown as an example in the society then the hope will die inside the audience and they will go back to the same great frustration of the aftermath of World War II. Again, there will increase the urge to do wrong things and go away with it, if there is no display of the punishment of evil. However, the hero can

never die no matter how close he goes to death because of the villain. There is a reason behind this reappearance of the hero; because if the hero dies, the society will get the wrong message from this and it will break the rule of ideology.

### Myth of Individualism: Deconstructing the Traditional Concept of Hero

Superheroes represent a completely different concept than postmodernism. Where Fredric Jameson's (1988) concept – death of the subject suggests that individualism is only a myth, it never existed at the first place (p. 17); superheroes try to represent their uniqueness and individuality through their costume and unrecognizable identity. They are still living in the era of great modernism which believed in a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality, which can be expected to generate its own unique version of the world and forge its own unique, unmistakable style (Jameson, 1988, p. 17). When this individualism is a matter of past and all individualism is dead, why would these superheroes try to maintain their uniqueness? On the other hand, if we consider those superhero films then we will find postmodernist element of no uniqueness. All these films present the same thing over and over again. "In a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (Jameson, 1988, p. 18). So, ultimately no matter how hard these heroes try to be unique, they fail to establish a new style when their characters are established long ago through comics. At the end, they end up with cliché performances that are very predictable in this postmodern era. But with the emergence of a villain we get to see another new X-treme which brings the new level of action and creates a scope for the superhero to entertain people with his new extremity. Every time a villain is killed at the end of the story and for another story they create another new villain with a new kind of extremity. So, when superheroes turn into cliché characters, supervillains bring the new excitement with another X-treme power; it was mentioned before that, with the death of one X-treme the necessity of another X-treme increases. But superheroes do not seem to fulfill these criteria of X-treme and they end up showing the same action with the same kind of power until they are challenged by the new kind of X-treme supervillain. That might be the reason that nowadays we see more popularity of villains than the hero. When media brings X-treme violence available in the spectator of the audience, the scope of fantasizing violence becomes explicit. At that time when people cannot show their inner violence and cannot go to the ultimate X-treme in reality, X-treme films help them to fill in the gaps of ideology. So, villains seem more reachable and exciting than the superhero while villains teach them to go to the possible limit without any hesitation. That might be the reason that Alan Moore has developed a new kind of concept of superhero in a face of villain through *Watchmen* (1987). This story is created to deconstruct the concept of contemporary superhero films and to critique the superhero concept. But the motif remains still the same which is the greater good of the world but in a different way. They cannot come out of the concept of greater good and refuse the personal interest in every case. In the film *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006) there is a question about the superhuman power, that is – "Will it be for the greater good or will it be used for personal or for destructive ends?" (Arad, Donner, Winter, & Ratner, 2006, 00:12:29). A superhero will be at the question of misusing his power if he uses it for personal motif. As if his power does not belong to him, as long as the greater good is concerned. In spite of having the X-treme power a person is forbidden to use it the way he wants. In some way *Watchmen* are seen to use their X-treme power for destructive ends. It might deconstruct the conventional idea about superhero films but they are also at the same duty as the superheroes to watch over the world. When they are doing the wellbeing of the world, they are seen to go to X-treme by refusing the conventional ideology of the existing society. They might not be proven to be the typical superhero, but they have the courage to break the limitation and go to X-treme. Through these

Watchmen the world would learn the necessity of X-treme when being normal fails to fulfill the motif, whether it is personal or universal.

As mentioned before, we are living in an X-treme culture, for children or teenagers; violence is the new mainstream which creates adventure in their minds and they do not feel any domination or control in that. That is why children are seen to be more interested in villains who expose the extremity; not like any conventional stereotyped superheroes who only maintain the rules and boundaries of their power. Superheroes seem more cliché where villains are appreciated for being outrageous by showing extremity. In the Bollywood mainstream this example is given in Anubhav Sinha's *Ra-One* where the child actor shows his excitement about villains, "Villains are awesome. They have no rules. They just win" (Khan & Sinha, 2011, 00:17:15). But his father says, "Hero always wins. That is why he is hero. Truth and goodness win" (Khan & Sinha, 2011, 00:17:32). But the child is obsessed with the Xtreme power of villains for which he named himself 'Lucifer' (the original name of 'Satan') in the virtual world where he can show his inner extremity by playing videogames. This mainstream film promotes the villain as more powerful and important than the superhero which is proven by its name 'Ra-One'. This name came from Hindu Mythology where 'Raavan' was the villain against the god 'Ram'. That mythology told the story of the defeat of an undefeatable villain by the good modest godlike hero. Every year people in India celebrate 'Dussehra' where they kill and burn the symbolic replica of 'Raavan' to kill the evil inside every human being. In this film the virtual character "Ra-One" the villain, says, "You burn him every year because he never dies" (Khan & Sinha, 2011, 01:48:17). If the 'Raavan' is dead long ago then what is the point of killing him every year? "Those who die – don't need killing again and again" (Khan & Sinha, 2011, 01:48:37). In reality burning the replica is a reminder to the human kind that the devil has to die; so that people cannot fantasize about the extreme. That is the reason why every time a villain is shown to face cruel death to maintain the sign of ideology. But this postmodern world denies accepting this kind of devastating threat which is represented through the shattering destruction of villains. If ideology was successful to create the fear of destructive end of extreme villain in human mind, then there was no need for the reminder every time; neither through visual media nor through rituals. Besides, the popularity of villains is increasing.

#### **Personal Ethics: No control of the authority**

To understand the popularity of villain more than superheroes, we need to have deeper understanding about postmodern ethics. There is always a contradiction between personal ethics and universal ethics. For example a dialogue of the professor from *X-Men: The Last Stand* can be taken – "When is it acceptable to use our power and when do we cross that invisible line that turns us into tyrants over our fellow man?" (Arad, Donner, Winter, & Ratner, 2006, 00:12:45). This dialogue raises the question of ethics which decides the use of power and tells people that they cannot cross the invisible line. "But Einstein said that ethics are an exclusive human concern without any superhuman authority behind it" (Arad, et al., 2006, 00:12:52) – that was the reply of a student. But the professor rejected that personal concept of ethics. Because according to him ethics is a concern of the society not a matter of personal realization. In *Man of Steel* (2013) the supervillain says to Superman that, "the fact that you possess a sense of morality and we do not, gives us an evolutionary advantage" (Nolan, Roven, Snyder, Thomas, & Snyder, 2013, 01:33:37), "And if history has proven anything it is that evolution always wins" (Nolan, et al., 2013, 01:33:55). So, the villain bluntly expresses the limitation of a superhero who is limited and conventionally old and that need to be changed by evolution. This dialogue already proves that the Superman does not belong to this post-modern world. His character still lives in the modern world which follows the strict rule of modern ethics. Here rises the necessity of postmodern ethics which does not need any kind of outer force to control human ethics. Before going to postmodern

ethics the understanding of modern ethics is necessary, because that will show the contradictory idea of two different eras. According to Jacobsen and Poder (2008), "Modern ethics was a 'Law-ethics'. What was less successful at a sociological level was the idea of autonomy" (p. 62). In the modern idea ethics was a question of obeying universal laws. Modern philosophers rejected the idea of metaphysical foundation of ethics and rather established a new understanding of ethics which was an outcome of human rationality. On the other hand, some of them contradicted this idea of universal law. According to Kant's 'ethics', moral agent is not questioned of obeying any laws of religion and tradition, rather he is free to be ruled by a universal law that he had formulated himself. Here comes a problem in sociological level that whether they are capable of ruling themselves or not. So, the modern era could not become what Kant dreamed of autonomous morality (Jacobsen & Poder, 2008, p. 62). This concept is appreciable in the postmodern era which believes in individual and cultural uniqueness in reverence for ethics. According to Bauman (1993), postmodernism breaks the concept of ethics of modernity and if modernity promoted ethics to shape moral behaviors according to law, then postmodernity offers a morality without ethics (p. 31). Again, Jacobsen and Poder (2008) said, postmodern morality is not a universal law but the infinite responsibility in front of other or in a particular situation (p. 63). So, there is nothing absolute or pre-determined in terms of postmodern ethics rather, it seems logical to create an individual morality according to the situation demand or in the case of dealing with another person. Postmodern ethics rejects the universal understanding of ethics as long as cultural difference exists to allow everyone to practice their individual ethics in their own way. Ideology and society created ethics which influence every social human being. But postmodern ethics do not allow any authority beyond the self. Now, it does not matter what other thinks; if anything matters then, that is the self.

As postmodern ethics rejects any kind of outer authority, it rejects the ideology which controls our fantasy so that people can be free to fantasize anything they want. When being good or bad is not the main concern, being superhuman is; then nothing can stop humanity to test their every possible limit that can be in the face of either villain or superhero. For Bataille (1988), common knowledge or knowledge gathered from all experiences arises from the rules which they follow – to the extreme limit of the "possible". Each bit of knowledge is worth something and it is necessary to know what is worth the ultimate experience that is, the extreme limit. Extreme limit of "possible" would give way to everything in an instant of insane courage; nothing resists the necessity of going further. If it had required madness would have been the payment (Bataille, 1988, p. 40). Most of the superhero narratives include a villain inside a mad scientist as if knowledge destroys the morality inside a scientist. This clearly suggests that gaining too much or knowing too much can be a curse. In that case Doctor Faustus's character can be brought to clarify the idea of being cursed for being X-tremely knowledgeable. People always had the urge to be wild and evil and they liked the temptation of extremity which was controlled by ideology. That is why Christopher Marlow had to show the fall of Doctor Faustus but made him the tragic hero. The popularity of villainous X-treme was visible even that time. That is because people seem to fantasize. In Žižek's (1997) word, "an indulgence in the hallucinatory realization of desire prohibited by the Law" (p. 17). So, anything that is forbidden by the law attracts our human mind quickly. Even the fall of Adam and Eve resulted from the choice to disobey in order to retain the erotic rapture of Eve (Žižek, 1997, p. 19). So, going against the law can be adventurous at the same time dangerous but desirable for the extremity of human mind. People are tempted like a child towards the negativity or whatever is forbidden. This human nature came from their very first ancestor Adam and Eve who could not resist the temptation of forbidden fruit. That is why, Faustus wanted to achieve that X-treme by living every bit of his life when he knows he will have to die someday. In that sense Doctor Faustus's dialogue can be quoted from Christopher Marlowe's

(1965) tragedy,

Faustus:

“Jerome’s Bible, Faustus, view it well:

[He reads.] “*Stipendium peccatimorsest.*” Ha!

“*Stipendium....*”

The reward of sin is death: that’s hard.

[He reads.] “*Si peccassenegamus, fallimur,*

*Etnullaest in nobisveritas*”

If we say that we have no sin,

We deceive ourselves, and there’s no truth in us.

Why, then, belike we must sin,

And so consequently die.

Ay, we must die an everlasting death.” (p. 5-6)

## Conclusion

When life has so much to gain then why would anyone be in the control of ideological limitation like superheroes? While the ethics of being good makes someone limited, freedom from any kind of traditional ethics can make one X-treme. Personal morality is much better than the universal ethics. At least it gives the satisfaction of deciding something by concerning only self, instead of any outer supernatural source. In that sense people are free to fall for villainous X-treme if their post-modern ethics allows them when they think that villains are more powerful and successful in testing every possibility in this life and bringing the X-treme out of the normal human being than the superheroes; because they do not have any bindings to test the ultimate X-treme.

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# Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA): Evidence for Bangla-English Learning Bilingual Child's Phonological Development

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## Abstract

This article falls within the domain of “bilingual first language acquisition”. It discusses the early phonological development of a Bangla-English learning bilingual child at 12 months of age focusing on the occurrences of universal and language specific sound patterns found in the pre-linguistic and first word stage of infant vocalization. The co-occurrences of universal trends were indeed visible in the infants’ babbling in both language contexts, which is consistent with previous studies. However, since language specific patterns for Bangla and English were not substantial at this early stage, “language differentiation” had not taken place. Traces of mixed sound segments from the two languages provide evidence that it is possible for infants to develop sound segments from two separate phonological systems simultaneously, that is, a child is able to acquire two first languages simultaneously, though the production level may not be homogeneous. This could be related to input factors. Though this research is an extraction from an ongoing longitudinal study, the findings are noteworthy as they provide data for developmental process at a given phase of language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA), phonological development, universal and language specific sound patterns, language differentiation.

## Introduction

In this era of globalisation, infant bilingualism, involving more and more languages, especially Asian languages, is increasing, not only through mixed marriages, but predominantly via employment and settlement of the parents’ generation overseas. As such, ‘bilingual first language acquisition’ (BFLA) has become an intriguing as well as a crucial topic for research over the last few decades not only in the interdisciplinary field of child language research, but also in bilingual education itself.

There are claims that “bilingual and multilingual children are the majority not a minority” in today’s world; hence, it has become “a norm rather than the exception” (Wei, 2010, 8). With this view in hand, the current paper aims at discussing the preliminary findings and analysis of a bilingual infant’s phonological development at 12 months of age, focusing on the phoneme categories and syllable structure of both Bangla and English as his first two languages. Prior to the analysis of the data, the author offers a brief discussion on this widely experienced but less discussed phenomenon of BFLA, its theoretical background and some relevant cross-linguistic research findings.

## What is BFLA: A Definition

The theoretical implication of ‘bilingual first language acquisition’ (BFLA) is that when a child is exposed to two languages from early childhood or birth, both the languages are accentuated as ‘first’, and the developmental pathways of these languages are analogous to a monolingual acquiring his or her single first language (Wei, 2010). However, there could be qualitative differences in

terms of pace of development and influence or input. Two types of BFLA have also been documented. If a child is exposed to two languages more or less simultaneously from the first year of his or her life, it is referred to as ‘simultaneous bilingual first language acquisition’. Whereas, a child who has acquired minimal competence in the native language of his/her parents and then encounters a second language and receives regular exposure to it at an early age while he/she starts attending preschool, is referred to as ‘sequential bilingualism’ (McLaughlin, 1978; Yip and Matthews, 2007). The preliminary findings of the present study focus on simultaneous bilingualism.

### Theoretical Background

Previously bilingual acquisition was viewed as burdensome, which could strain the cerebral system leading to confusion and deficiencies in the acquisition of the two languages. Many parents also believe that exposure to dual language environment results in language delay (King and Fogle, 2006). However, research evidence shows that the human mind has the capacity to acquire and develop more than one language successfully without any deficiencies (Chirsheva, 2010; Yip and Matthews, 2007; Itani-Adams, 2007; Keshavarz, 2007; Kuang, 2007; Qi, 2004; Johnstone, 2004; Keshavarz and Ingram, 2002).

BFLA has a long history, yet established theories on bilingual acquisition have not surfaced, and thus it still relies on previous theories on first language acquisition in general. The earliest hypotheses in this field have evolved from the central theme based on the question much often asked, “do bilingual children have one undifferentiated linguistic system or two differentiated systems?” (Wei, 2007). Various reports on children’s mixing of elements from their two languages in their initial stage of language development have led earlier researchers such as Volterra and Taeschner (1978) to theorize that children start off with one linguistic system. This supposition became established as the ‘fused system hypothesis’ or the ‘unitary language system’.

Subsequent researchers such as Genesee (2001, 2007, and 2008) and Meisel (1989) refute this former claim based on methodological shortcomings, and argue that children are able to differentiate two languages from the earliest stages of bilingual development. This theory became documented as the “separate system hypothesis” or “dual system hypothesis. Genesee (2001) further states that children’s language mixing may vary across studies and is related to other factors such as input by parents and caregivers and is perhaps not due to a fused system. Up till now, most of the research in this area demonstrates that bilingual acquisition is characterized by some form of cross-linguistic influence. However, researches on these issues are limited and investigation still continues (Wei, 2007).

### Issues Related to BFLA

***Universal traits in first language acquisition.*** Research in child language acquisition shows evidence of common universal traits in infant’s pre-linguistic vocalization and first words across different languages (Kern and Davis, 2009; Kern, Davis, MacNeilage, Koçbas, Kuntay, & Zink, in press). These cross-linguistic commonalities in babbling and early speech demonstrate shared co- occurrence patterns in sound segment combinations. This is related to the physical maturation of the vocal tract at this early stage, whereby infants lack autonomous movement of all the active articulators, thus limiting to certain categories of sound segment combinations to emerge more frequently than others (MacNeilage, Davis, Kinney, & Matyear, 2000). In other words, infant’s vocalization is “bio-mechanically” controlled. There tends to be rhythmic patterns of consonant and vowel sound alternations, such as, coronal consonants followed by front vowels (e.g. “di”, “de” “dæ”), labial consonants followed by central vowels (e.g. “pa”, “pə”, “pɑ”) and dorsal consonants

followed by back vowels (e.g. “ku”, “kɔ”, “kɑ:”). The basic syllable structure produced at this phase tends to be the CV type open syllable, which is also the most basic syllable structure in the languages of the world. Among other early preferences in infant babbling and first words, there is evidence of considerably more stops, nasals and semivowel production than other consonants; more coronal and labials than dorsal consonants, and more mid and low front vowels, and central vowel production than other vowels (Kern et al., in press). These universal features have been found in both monolingual as well as bilingual studies. Kern and associates’ study (in press) concerned monolingual infants from 5 different language backgrounds - French, Tunisian, Romanian, Turkish and Dutch.

**Language specific characteristics.** Research also attests to the fact that infant’s articulation of sounds advances gradually from universal preference (language-independent) to native like preferences (language-specific), and evidence for both features has been reported in the babbling and early word stage of infants’ vocalization (Kern and Davis, 2009; Kern et al., in press). In bilingual cases, the emergence of language specific patterns in the child’s babbling provides verification for “language differentiation”. That means, infants prefer to produce sound patterns that are more frequent in their two native languages depending on the language contexts and the caregivers they are with (Maneva and Genesee, 2002; Johnstone 2004). Bilingual infants are eventually able to develop two sets of phonological properties of their two native languages. Besides, researchers support that input plays an important role in bilingualism and multilingualism (Werker, 2012).

**Input.** Since infants are able to process the linguistic properties of both their languages, it demonstrates that there is a close association between language input and language acquisition, (Pearson, Fernandez, Lewedeg, & Oller, 1997). However, individual variations in acquisition are also observed. Pertaining to these facts researchers take into consideration the varying possibilities of input, such as, home versus community language(s), language strategies employed by the interlocutors, and quality and quantity of input. Linguists still believe in the One-Parent-One-Language policy (OPOL) to bring up children as balanced bilinguals (Wei, 2010; Genesee and Nicoladis, 2005; Barron-Hauwaert, 2004). This means that one parent interacts in only one language with the child, and code-switching is limited. This strategy is common in mixed marriage cases, but can also be applied by bilingual parents from the same nationality. In multilingual and multiethnic countries like Malaysia, code switching is a common practice within the household, which is also reflected in children’s speech.

**Typology.** Another important variable in BFLA research is the “typology” (underlying structural properties) of the two languages that the child is acquiring. All languages share certain similarities as well as differ in other aspects of their structural makeup in both domains of morpho-syntax and phonology. For example, the basic syntactic structure of English is SVO (subject-verb-object), whereas in Bangla it is SOV (subject-object-verb). Certain phonetic segments in English are allophonic variations, while in Bangla it is phonemic, and so on. Analysing the various similarities and differences directs researchers to understand children’s language mixing (or cross-linguistic influence) which may occur, as well as other important variables related to the relationship of dual language acquisition.

### Methodological Concerns

Most of the research methods applied in BFLA are longitudinal single case studies which still remain as the principal method. Most of the investigations are also conducted by parent researchers who are linguists. Although there are concerns of parental biasness, literature review shows evidence of numerous case studies of this nature, and this type of case study is an accepted

norm due to its ethnographic technique of data collection in a naturalistic environment (e.g. Johnstone, 2004; Keshavarz and Ingram, 2002; Kuang, 2007; Qi, 2004; Volterra and Taeschner, 1978). In some cases 2 or 3 children are also studied. Although there are apprehensions and misunderstandings regarding the case study approach, there are also justifications and arguments in support of this methodology. According to Ruddin (2006, p. 798), “a case-study is an in-depth study of the particular, where the researcher seeks to increase his or her understanding of the phenomenon studied”, which is analysed intensely and explored without manipulation. Single case studies can also be replicated with different subjects, which is often difficult to perform in large-group studies. By this technique the researchers verify the generalizability of the findings (Morgan and Morgan, 2009). Although longitudinal case studies are time consuming, comprising of 2-3 or more years of ongoing data collection, requiring systematic observation, note taking and coding, as well as patience, it is a valid and appropriate method that suits the phenomenon of BFLA, and helps to understand the developmental patterns of the child’s language acquisition over a long period of time. In this regard, Wei (2010, p. 7) states, “one of the clear strengths of single-case studies is the depth of observation by the researcher of the child’s development over time. The quality of the data is usually very high.”

Studies on phonological acquisition can be either impressionistic or experimental, or a combination of both categories. Conventional impressionistic studies (the longitudinal case study method, as discussed above), are based on observational and perceptual methods using orthographic or phonetic transcription and are useful in providing information on a child’s gradual development over a longer period of time. They are also useful in understanding individual differences in children’s phonological acquisition. With the advancement of technology, phonological investigation has also led to more experimental designs to be carried out, either in the home setting or in the language laboratory. Laboratory procedures can be performed on larger samples and allows researchers to explore children’s linguistic capacity under more controlled conditions at a given point in time. It allows data to be examined from a more acoustic perspective (Demuth and Song, 2012). Experimental designs can also provide evidence for understanding what a child “can do” contrary to what they “actually do” (Wei, 2010).

### **Significance of the Study**

Scholarly investigations on bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA) comprising Bangla as one of the target languages have been substantially understudied. There is also a lack of empirical research on the phonological acquisition of Bangla and English as a child’s first two languages. This study provides an insight into some of the key issues discussed above by exploring the preliminary findings of a Bangladeshi child’s simultaneous acquisition of Bangla and English as his first two languages focusing on the early phonological developmental patterns acquired at 12 months of age. Thus it will no doubt contribute to the field of BFLA research.

### **Scope of the Study**

Since it will be too broad and exhaustive to explore all the phonetic and phonological features of the two languages, this paper will centre upon the inspection of one month’s data collection focusing on the analysis of consonant and vowel sound segments, syllabic utterances and segmental combinations that were acquired by the subject in his pre-linguistic vocalization and first words after his first birthday. A brief summary of the similarities and differences between Bangla and English phonology, relevant for this research, have also been discussed. The data discussed in this paper is an extraction from an extended ongoing longitudinal single case study involving the same subject.

## The Rationale for the Current Study

The rationale for focusing on one month of data obtained at 12 months is based on previous research, which suggests that infant's articulation of sounds advances gradually from universal preference to native like language preferences, and evidence for both features have been found in the babbling and early word stage of infants' vocalization (MacNeilage et al., 2000; Kern and Davis, 2009; Kern et al., in press). Studies in bilingual situations (BFLA) have also shown evidence for these universal and native language structures as well as "language differentiation" during the pre-lexical stage (Maneva and Genese, 2002; Johnstone, 2004). Yet other investigations in dual language acquisition have been reported to finding no significant differentiation in babbling irrespective of the language contexts (Poulin-Dubis and Goodz, 2001). Thus, centring upon these findings, it is predicted that at 12 months of age there will be traces of both universal preferences and native like preferences of Bangla and English phonological productions, and language differentiation may or may not be so perceptibly significant.

## Research Objectives

The objective of this investigation is to scrutinize the prevocalic sounds and first words that were acquired by the subject at 12 months, with the following goals in mind:

1. To test the common features that are universal across different languages
2. To examine native language features in both Bangla and English contexts, which would provide evidence for language differentiation
3. To explore the characteristics of the cross-linguistic utterances (mixed sound segments) that may be visible in the data

The first research objective concerning universal characteristics can be segmented in the following way:

It is predicted that there will be –

- A. a greater quantity of CV type open syllables in relation to other types of syllables.
- B. considerably more stops, nasal and semivowels than other consonants.
- C. more coronal and labials than dorsal consonants.
- D. more mid and low front vowels, and central vowels than other vowels.
- E. Preference for consonant-vowel combination patterns in the syllabic utterances, which will have the following traits:

Coronal consonants + front vowels

Labial consonants + central vowels

Dorsal consonants + back vowels

## Contrastive Analysis of Bangla and English Phonological Structures

From a typological perspective standard Bangla and English both have similarities as well as differences in many aspects of their phonemic inventories, and phonotactic constraints. Standard Bangla (SB) and Standard British English (SBE) were the two accentual varieties of input that the subject received on a daily basis from his caregivers.

### Inventory of Bangla and English Consonants

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the consonant phonemes of the standard varieties of Bangla (SB) and English (SBE) respectively following the standardized IPA method symbols. As can be observed, SBE consists of 24 consonant phonemes, while SB has a total of 32. The glottal stop [ʔ] has also been included in the SBE table, which can be considered as an allophonic variation of the [t] phoneme. Some diversities were found pertaining to some of the phoneme categories in the Coronal group of SB in different resource books. Thus to simplify, the phoneme categories that were actually produced by the interlocutors and the subject and used in the data transcription, were the ones that have been displayed in the Table (2). For further enquiry please refer to Chatterji (1996), Morshed (1997), Huq (2007) and Binoy (2009).

**Table 1: Standard British English Consonant Phonemes**

	Labial		Coronal				Dorsal	Laryngeal
	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives/stop	p b			t d			k g	(ʔ)
Fricatives		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral Approximant				l				
Central Approximant	w				ɹ	j		

**Table 2: Standard Bangla Consonant Phonemes**

	Labial	Coronal					Dorsal	Laryngeal
	Bilabial	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Unaspirated Plosives	p b	ʈ ɖ		c ɟ	t d		k g	
Aspirated Plosives	p <sup>h</sup> b <sup>h</sup>	ʈ <sup>h</sup> ɖ <sup>h</sup>		c <sup>h</sup> ɟ <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup> d <sup>h</sup>		k <sup>h</sup> g <sup>h</sup>	
Fricatives			s	ʃ				h
Nasals	m	*(ɳ)	n				ŋ	
Lateral Approximant			l					
Tap/Flap					ɽ			
Approximant	w			ɹ		y		

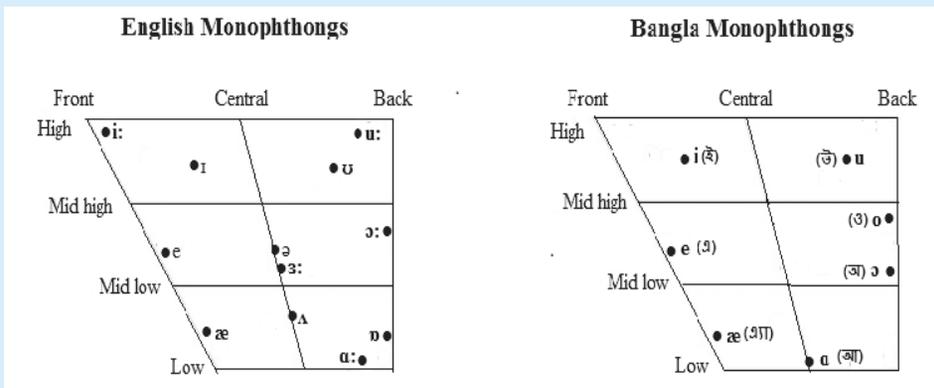
\*less frequency of occurrence

English and Bangla Vowels

**Monophthongs.** Monophthongs are vowels with a single vowel quality which remains more or less steady and are demonstrated with a single IPA vowel symbol. Standard British English (SBE) has a larger variety of monophthongs - 7 short vowels, including the “schwa” [ə], which is the shortest vowel in the vowel system, and 5 long vowels (Roach, 2000, Carr, 1999). Vowel length in SBE is an important feature as it can form minimal pairs, e.g. “sit” [sɪ t] and “seat” [si:t], “pull” [pʊ l] and “pool” [pu:l] and so on. Bangla has a total of 7 monophthongs and vowel length is not a salient feature in this language. But as a rule, all the Bangla vowels can be nasalised. English and Bangla monophthongs have been presented in the trapeziums (Chart 1) below.

**Diphthongs and Triphthongs.** Diphthongs and triphthongs also exist in both the languages. These vowels involve a movement or glide from one vowel quality to another (diphthongs) and then to another (triphthongs) within the same syllable, and treated as a “single unit of sound”, that is, a single phoneme (V). Thus a consonant followed by a diphthong or triphthong is considered as a single syllable. Some examples of Bangla diphthongs are - [nɔ i] (nine), [lɑ u] (pumpkin) etc. and triphthongs – [kʰɑoɑ] (to eat), [ɟɔiɑ] (pity) etc. For further discussion on SB vowel categories please refer to Chatterji (1996), Binoy (2009) and Kar (2009).

Chart 1: English and Bangla Monophthongs



Syllable Structure

The syllable is a phonological unit that helps to define a number of phonological properties of a particular language. The constituency of a syllabic structure comprises of a nucleus or peak (a vowel phoneme), which is obligatory, and onset(s) and coda(s) (consonant phonemes), which are optional, appearing before and after the vowel. No syllable can be formed without a nucleus; it is the core of a syllable. The number of onsets and codas in a syllable is confined to the phonotactic constraints of that particular language. The CV syllable (consonant followed by a vowel) is considered to be the most basic syllable structure in the languages of the world. It is also the syllable type that infants’ first produce in their babbling and early word stage (Carr, 1999). A syllable without a coda(s) is called an “open syllable”, while a syllable with at least one coda or more are called “closed syllables”, e.g. – V, CV, CCV, CCCV are open syllables, while VC, CVC, CVCC, CCVCCC and so on are closed syllables.

The syllable structure of SBE is quite flexible. English phonotactics allow monosyllabic words to have the following syllable structures, from a single V phoneme (e.g. “eye” [aɪ]) to VC, CV, CVC, and permitting up to CCC type consonant clusters to be present in both onset and coda positions, e.g. “spring” - [spɹɪŋ] - CCCVC, and “friends” - [fɹɛndz] - CCVCCC; and up to CCCC is allowed in some coda position, e.g. “sixths” [sɪksθs] - CVCCCC.

Bangla syllable structure is also quite flexible as compared to many other languages. Similar to English, Bangla words can have the following syllable structures, from a single V, to VC, CV and CVC, and allowing up to CCC in onset position, e.g. [sɪ.ɪ i] (wife) - CCCV. Some foreign words can also have CC in coda positions, e.g. the second syllable in the word “airport” [ea.ɪ .pɔ ɪ t] – VC-CVCC (Thompson, 2010).

## Methodology

**Study design.** The present investigation is a single case study, comprising of one month of data collection. The research procedure is solely impressionistic based on observation and perception of the informant’s phonological development of both the languages. As discussed earlier, this method is valid and appropriate, which has been employed in numerous studies in BFLA.

**The subject and his linguistic environment.** The present study focuses on the natural phonological development of one healthy normal infant boy with no hearing disabilities (addressed as M in this study), born in Malaysia to Bangladeshi parents and raised in Malaysia since birth. M is the second born child and has one elder sibling, a brother who is 8 years his senior. M was exposed to both Bangla and English from birth in a natural home environment. His parents followed the One Parent One Language (OPOL) policy at home to bring up the children as bilinguals, which is a common trait in bilingual cases. That means, when they spoke to M (as well as the elder sibling) they interacted in one specified language. Although both the parents are Bangladeshi nationals, they decided to follow the OPOL policy due to the multicultural and multilingual environment in Malaysia where English is only one of the community languages and stated as a second language under the government constitution. Malaysia also has different schooling systems, both national and national-type schools, whereby different languages are used in the primary sections, unlike native English speaking countries. Thus adhering to the OPOL policy and using English at home as one of the languages in Malaysia deemed appropriate and natural for educational as well as communicational purposes.

The informant received regular Bangla input from his father and English input from his mother, which can be considered standard in terms of pronunciation and grammar (near-native like) due to her acquisition of English in Britain during her school years and retaining the language ever since. The mother also utilized certain Bangla kinship terms with the child, such as “Nani”, “Dadi” for grandmother, “Bhiah” for brother and “Baba” for father, since it appeared to be more close and natural in terms of relationship. However, when the parents communicated with each other, in front of the child, they spoke in Bangla most of the time, code-switching in English time-to-time. The subject also received Bangla input from his maternal grandmother and one aunt. The grandmother played an important role as a caregiver during the time of data collection for this investigation.

## Data Collection - Transcription and Analysis

This study comprises of one month of data collection when M reached his first birthday. Audio recording and note taking were the two main sources of data collection. Data was compiled in two sessions (2 weeks interval), each session comprising of 2 parts; part 1 with Bangla speaking caregivers (father and grandmother, Bangla context), and part 2 with English speaking caregiver (mother, English context). Session one consisted of 4 recordings, 2 recordings within the Bangla speaking context (part 1), and 2 recordings within the English speaking context (part 2). All the recordings were held between intervals of one to two days, however, within the same week. Session two comprised of 2 recordings, one in each language context (part 1 and 2), held on the same day.

Thus, 6 recordings were conducted in total, 3 recordings for part 1, and 3 recordings for part 2. All the recordings were conducted at home in a naturalistic setting during interplay or feeding time. One recording with the grandmother was conducted at her home.

M's vocalization, which included babbling and first two words, was transcribed using the phonetic transcription, placing diacritic signs wherever necessary for analysis and discussion. Cries and groans were omitted from the analysis. Sounds regarded as a single utterance consisted of a stream of sounds (babbling or a word or words), and separated by half a second of pause before the onset of the next utterance. The results discussed here focus on the following patterns in the child's vocalization –

- occurrences of monosyllabic, bisyllabic and polysyllabic (more than two syllables) utterances,
- occurrences of phoneme combinations,
- occurrences of phoneme categories in both languages.

### Results and Discussion

At 12 months of age M's recording of sounds consisted of variegated or non-reduplicated babbling with some instances of reduplicated babbling. He was clearly in the stage of variegated babbling, but the intonation contour or prosody was absent. His production of sounds consisted of a variety of consonant and vowel combinations forming all the three types of syllabic patterns: monosyllabic, bisyllabic and polysyllabic in both Bangla and English speaking environments. M had acquired two adult like words at this stage, "aita" and "Allah". He learnt "Allah" from his grandmother since the "Ajan" (summon for prayer) was clearly heard from her house. The term "aita" had different connotations, which was actually the first lexical item that he had acquired. In some instances it had an interrogative implication meaning "What is it?" or "What is this?" as he pointed to something or while his caregivers were showing something. The questions often had a rising tone. At other times it was implied as a demonstrative determiner, "That one" or "This one" as he wanted something, sometimes pointing to an object.

Both the words are bisyllabic. There were also variations of vowel sounds in both the words, such as mid vowel (first syllable) – [el.lah], [e.ta], or low vowels – [al.lah], [a.ta], [æ:.tæ], or a variety of diphthongs (first syllable) – [[ei.ta], [ai.ta], [oi.tə:].

Syllabic utterances as well as utterances that consisted of only consonants were taken into account. Consonantal utterances largely consisted of the nasal [m] phoneme. Table 3 illustrates the total number of utterances as well as syllabic utterance types produced in both Bangla and English contexts. As can be observed, M produced more syllabic utterances in the English language environment than in the Bangla environment. However, the occurrence pattern is consistent, that is, bisyllabic utterances topped the most in both contexts, followed by monosyllabic and then polysyllabic utterances. In Maneva and Genesee's (2002) study conducted on a French-English learning infant of the same age as M, the results reveal that though the infant produced more monosyllabic utterances than bisyllabic ones in both settings, his total production of bisyllabic utterances in the English speaking environment outnumbered his production of bisyllabic ones in the French speaking environment. This evidence shows that infants produce more bisyllabic utterances in the English speaking context than other environments. However, more tests need to be conducted on Bangla-English learning infants to verify the consistency of this result.

Table 3: Utterances and Syllabic Utterance Types

	Total no. of Utterances	Total Syllabic Utterances	Monosyllabic	Bisyllabic	Polysyllabic
English	236	211	61	116	34
Bangla	206	138	38	68	32
Total	442	349	99	184	66

Among the different syllable types, the syllable structures were limited to - V, CV, VC, CVC, and a few instances of CCCV types, which consisted of nasals and the glottal [h], e.g [mhnə]. In both the contexts there was a greater quantity of open syllables among which the CV type open syllables outnumbered all other types of syllable structures. This is a universal trait found in other monolingual (Kern et.al., in press; Oller and Eilers, 1982) and bilingual studies (Maneva and Genesee, 2002) involving infants of similar age in different language environments.

M produced different types of consonant sounds – oral stops, nasals, semi-vowels, liquids, the glottal fricative [h], and a few instances of the glottal stop [ʔ]. Oral stops were the most frequent, followed by nasals, which also includes the non-syllabic nasal [m] occurrences. This was followed by semi-vowels, then liquids [l] and [ɹ]. The frequency of the glottal fricative [h] was similar to the frequency of the liquids; however, it was less than the semi-vowels. The frequencies of these occurrences were observed in both language contexts, which reflect universal preferences found across different language environments.

In terms of place of articulation, the occurrences of coronal consonants were the most prominent category, which consisted of alveolar and dental sounds in both language environments. This was followed by labials, consisting of only bilabials and no labio-dental sounds. The dorsal consonants were the least frequent in both the language settings, consisting of velar sounds. These results again reveal universal preferences in infant vocalization in babbling. However, it was also observed that there were more occurrences of glottalic or laryngeal sounds [h] and [ʔ] than the dorsals, but they were less frequent than the coronal and labials.

In terms of vowel occurrences, there was a high frequency of front vowels among which the mid and low front vowels [e] and [æ] were the most prominent. M also produced a large number of another category of a low front vowel - [a], which can be described as a sound that occurs in between the English low front vowel [æ] and the Bangla low central vowel [a]. It is similar to the vowel quality that exists in the English diphthong [aɪ] as in “buy” [baɪ], but not exactly approximating the Bangla vowel [a] as in “amar” [ɑmɑɹ] (mine). Similar to Kern and associates’ study (2009) where infants from five different language speaking environments were investigated, M in this survey also produced more mid and low front, and mid and low central vowels as compared to other vowels in both language environments. Nonetheless, M’s production also comprised of a large number of back vowels which is inconsistent with Kern et. al.s (2009) findings. This could be due to the language input. SBE contains more back vowels than SB, and M produced a higher quantity of back vowels in the English speaking environment.

Among the consonant-vowel combination patterns in the syllabic utterances, as predicted, there were more correct instances of coronal consonants with front vowels. This further provides evidence for universal preference in different language contexts. But the other consonant vowel combinations, for example, labials with central vowels and dorsals with back vowels, were infrequent. M produced more front vowels with these consonant varieties. Most of the labials with central vowels consisted of the bilabial semi-vowel [w] with the Bangla central vowel [a].

Pertaining to the topic of language specific patterns, the results demonstrate M’s production of syllabic utterances in the English speaking environment was higher as compared to the Bangla

speaking environment. Due to the higher syllabic load, it could be that M's production in each type of syllabic utterances (monosyllabic, bisyllabic and polysyllabic) was also higher in the English setting (see Table 3). Moreover, M's production of syllables containing a "stop/plosive" phoneme followed by a vowel was much higher in the English context than the Bangla context. He produced the Bangla oral stops in both the language environments (discussed below). Although these results are similar to Maneva and Genesee's study (2002) on the English-French learning infant whose production also showed a higher proportion of bisyllabic utterances and the stop + vowel syllables in the English speaking context, there is still a need for more empirical studies to be conducted not only on bilingual cases of Bangla-English learning infants' phonological development, but also on monolingual cases of infants' phonological acquisition in Bangla. In fact, at this stage in M's phonological development, it is difficult to find substantial evidence to claim for "language differentiation".

There is clear evidence in the data for mixed production of sound segments. M's production of oral stops in both language contexts outnumbered all other categories of consonant phonemes, and amongst them the Bangla stops were the most frequently occurring sound production. Bangla consists of a much larger variety of oral stops in its phonemic inventory, and although M was constantly receiving these kinds of input from his Bangla speaking caregivers (father and grandmother), he produced the Bangla oral stops in both the language environments constantly in syllable initial position. The stop phonemes that he uttered were the Bangla dental [t̪] and [d̪], and also [b], [g] and [d] phonemes which exist in both the languages, and the unaspirated [t], [k] and [p], which are separate phonemes in Bangla, but allophonic variations in English. Below is given a list of these categories in terms of frequency of occurrence.

**Table 4: Occurrence of Stop phonemes**

More frequent	t, t̪, d, d̪
Less frequent	b, k, p, g
Rare occurrences	d, k <sup>h</sup>

English has aspirated initial stop phonemes [p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>]. They occur only in syllable initial/onset position, while the unaspirated versions are allophonic variations, which do not appear in initial position. But Bangla has a set of both aspirated and unaspirated stop phonemes which can occur in onset position. Data shows that M's production of these stops were always unaspirated (except for 2 occurrences) in syllable initial position irrespective of the language contexts. These results have been reported in a number of other studies. Oller and Eiler's (1982) analysis on Spanish and English learning infants have demonstrated a preference for unaspirated initial stop consonants. An earlier study conducted by Oller, Wieman, Doyle, & Ross (1975) on monolingual infants' phonological development in an English speaking environment shows similar results. Oller and Warren (as cited in Oller et al., 1975, p. 6) have also reported comparable outcomes of unaspirated stops in word-initial position. These results provide strong support for universal preferences in infant babbling of unaspirated stop phonemes over aspirated ones found not only in English speaking environment but also across different language communities.

Among the nasal stop production in both language contexts, [m] and [n] were more frequent than [ŋ], which was rare. All these nasal sounds are common in both the languages. M did not produce any fricative sounds at all in any of the language settings, except for the glottal [h]. This is in accordance with the milestones of phonemic production at this age. Although liquids such as [l] and [ɹ] are acquired at a later stage among English learning infants, M had produced these segments at 12 months of age, though not so frequently. [l] was more apparent than [ɹ], with a higher frequency load in the Bangla setting. This could be triggered by the input factor, as the grandmother often pronounced the term "Allah" with the child. Both of these phonemes appear in the inventories of both SBE and SB.

A mixed variety of vowel segments were apparent in M's linguistic repertoire in both language environments. Amongst the most frequent were the mid and low front vowels [e], [æ] and [a] (present in both contexts), and the Bangla central vowel [ɑ]. There were also traces of a number of back vowels which are common in both the languages.

The two lexical items "aita" and "Allah" that M had acquired at 12 months of age appeared in both language contexts, despite the fact that "aita" is a Bangla word and that the mother never applied it while interaction with the child in English. However, she did respond to the term by answering the question or performing to the child's needs. The father utilized it quite often while interacting in Bangla. These input factors could have prompted the child to produce the term recurrently in both contexts. These data provide evidence for cross-linguistic utterance in M's pre-linguistic vocalization.

### Conclusion

The preliminary findings of this research have yielded some insight into the acquisition stage of a Bangla-English learning bilingual child's phonological development at 12 months of age. Traces of universal features were visible in the data, which contribute further to support the common trends found across different language situations. The results that were contradictory to the predictions for universal preferences can only be evinced by further investigation of the corresponding language combinations (on children's acquisition of Bangla and English as their first two languages). Inconsistency of the use of language specific features found in the child's vocalization in the two contexts suffices to conclude that, language differentiation was not apparently visible at this early stage of phonological development. That is to say, the child did not babble differently in the two language environments by 12 months. In fact, fusion of phonetic and phonological elements from both the languages was evident in the data, with a higher proportion of the Bangla stop phonemes, and the common elements of both the languages.

These results cannot be generalized to conclude that all Bangla-English learning bilingual child of equivalent age will show a similar acquisition trail in their phonological development. Moreover, the presentation of these findings is also at its preliminary stage. However, it can be inferred from these discussions that it is possible for a child to develop sound segments and structures from two separate phonological systems simultaneously given that they receive input systematically. It also provides evidence for developmental process at a certain stage of phonological acquisition. Thus, this survey has to some extent enhanced our general understanding of the phenomenon of BFLA in different language combinations. More empirical research on both infant monolingual and bilingual cases need to be conducted involving Bangla as one of the target languages, so that cross-linguistic comparisons of phonological development can be drawn.

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# Documentary-Making Methodology: Step-by-step Documentation of Life after Grey

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## Abstract:

One of the unnoticed snares of a first-time documentary filmmaker, besides insufficient research and clear objective(s), is lack of specific knowledge of research methodology. Documentary filmmaking is a separate genre, with many sub-genres, which varies from commercial to alternative/art filmmaking. There is plenty of available literature in books and research articles that deal with separate aspects of this genre of filmmaking in terms of modes and approaches of documentary, research, preproduction, production, postproduction, and so on. However, there is hardly any academic book or article in the Bangladeshi context that comprehensively provides the step-by-step guide to documentary filmmaking, particularly through a pragmatic demonstration of a film that has been made for the purpose of emphasizing the methodology. Theory and practice may not always conform; in such case(s) overcoming unanticipated challenges that threaten an entire project is imperative. This paper endeavours to portray the step-by-step methodological journey of documentary filmmaking from the initial stage of idea generation, through research phase to pre and post production until the official screening from a first-time filmmaker's perspective. The methodological steps are based on the making of documentary *Life after Grey* (2015).

## Rationale

In spite of abundance of literature on documentary films (see Schmidt & Thompson, 2015; McClintock, 2015; Nichols, 2010; Barsam & Monahan, 2010; Aufderheide, 2007), a first-time filmmaker's worst nightmare is when things do not go according to plan. Bookish knowledge in the form of 'history of' and/or 'introduction to' documentary making, coupled with academic lectures can provide the theoretical foundations that need to be combined with the practical aspects of filmmaking with anticipated and unanticipated outcomes. Such a combination may not always be applied in a balanced proportion in the graduate and undergraduate programmes of public and private universities in Bangladesh. Consequently, a gap remains between the presumption and purpose. So, how does one combine the predictably theoretical knowledge with the potentially unpredictable spur-of-the-moment decisions in documentary filmmaking? Whether the decisions are well planned out or spontaneous, they should always be aligned to meet the main objective of the project at hand. Any decision that is contrary to the main objective, can have repercussions in the long run, and can have detrimental impact in the final production of the documentary. This paper delineates a step-by-step framework for combining theoretical aspects of filmmaking with informed spur-of-the-moment resolutions. The procedural progress of a first-time documentary filmmaker is demonstrated from the inception to the screening of the documentary *Life after Grey* (2015)<sup>2</sup>, keeping the methodological framework in mind.

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<sup>2</sup> *Life after Grey* (2015) is a 35 minutes documentary film on the theme of rescue and rehabilitation of underage girls forced into the flesh-trade. It was made by Wafi Aziz Sattar and Muhammed Shahriar Haque as a requirement of CMN 662: *Television and Video Documentary*, which was a specialization course for the MSS in Media and Communication programmed, at Independent University Bangladesh (IUB). The film is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1Rqk6QWwT4>

## Significance of Documentary History

Documentary is an exercise in the interpretation of factual and fictional information from the director's viewpoint. Whether such a statement is debatable or not, it seems rather commonsensical to be informed of the past when working on the present. Hence, before choosing a topic or issue for a documentary film, one should get to know about the history of this genre of filmmaking to lay a solid foundation and to develop schematic background based on what has been done in the past in this field. History of documentary filmmaking would provide the first time filmmaker with the knowledge of relevant techniques, methodologies, approaches—whether experimental or traditional—in order to embark upon the journey of making a film of this nature.

### What is a documentary film?

It is quite difficult to provide a definition of documentary that may be unanimously accepted by scholars and professionals in the field. However, for the sake of understanding, a simplistic definition may be provided; that is, a documentary is a piece of journalistic endeavour at capturing, documenting and portraying a particular dimension of real life event, incident, an individual's life or a group's way of life on film with rational integrity. Subsequently, "documentary film is ... concerned with the recording of reality, the education of viewers, or the presentation of political or social analyses" (Barsam & Monahan, 2010, p. 65). However, to think that just because "actual people, places, and events" are used as "source material", documentary filmmakers "always reflect objective truth" would be inaccurate (Barsam & Monahan, 2010, p. 65). In other words, documentary film according to Barsam and Monahan (2010, p. 547) is "a nonfiction film that presents the filmmakers' perspective on actuality", and "regardless of approach, every documentary is shaped by the filmmaker's intent and subjective interpretation of ideas and actual events". Chapman (2009, p. 48) says the "trend over the last twenty years or so has been towards greater reflexivity and subjectivity". Likewise, Aufderheide (2007, p. 2) argues that since "documentaries are about real life; they are not real life". He elaborates by saying that they are "portraits of real life, using real life as their raw material, constructed by artists and technicians who make myriad decisions about what story to tell" (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 2). In other words, a "documentary film tells a story about real life, with claims to Truthfulness", says Aufderheide (2007, p. 2), which does not always have to be based on "complete truth" and can "employ poetic license from time to time". Over the years the definition of observational documentary has been contested due to the influx of subjectivity (Goodarzi & Tamjidi, 2014, p. 298). Rabiger (2004) considers this type of film making to be a 'young art form' where 'there are no rules'.

### Emergence of documentary and movements

Whether the earliest moving pictures had any documentary value may be subject to debate, but Musser (1996, p. 88) does not consider them to 'function within the documentary tradition':

The very earliest motion pictures, whether *Sadow* (Edison, 1894), *Bucking Broncho* (Edison, 1894), *Rough Sea at Dover* (Paul-Acres, 1895), *The German Emperor Reviewing His Troops* (Acres, 1895), or *Sortie d'usine* (*Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory*, Lumiere, 1895), had 'documentary tradition'.

However, it may be assumed that their contribution paved the ground for documentary filmmaking. Rabiger (2004, p. 19) says that the "documentary spirit is first evident in Russia with the Kino-Eye of Dziga Vertov and his group" who "stylized fictional life presented by bourgeois cinema" and believed "passionately in the value of what he called *kino-pravda*, a 'film-truth' cinema of real life captured by the camera". Vertov (in Winston, 2011a, p. 85) claims that *Kinoglaz: Zhizn'*

*vrasplokh* (Kino Eye: Life Caught Unaware, 1924) was the “world’s first attempt to create a film-object without the participation of actors, artists, directors; without using a studio, sets, costumes” and “all members of the cast continue to do what they usually do in life”.

According to Swann (1989, p. 1) the terms ‘actuality’ and ‘documentary’ are “synonymous with Britain as neorealism is with Italy and New Wave with France”, and the trends interestingly enough emerged in order to rival the “colonial control of the American film in their respective countries”. After World War I, the discourse of the British government, who wanted a better relationship with the mass people, included terms like ‘general public’ and ‘public opinion’, which was a result of an influential book by Walter Lippmann titled *Public Opinion* (Swann, 1989, pp. 2-3). Swann (1989, p. 3) says that this book paved the way for “John Grierson and others who imported American propaganda and public relations expertise into Britain in the 1920s”.

Aufderheide (2007, p. 3) says that the term ‘documentary’ originated in the late 19th century when people started to “record moving pictures of real-life events” which some called ‘documentaries’, while others called ‘educationals’, ‘actualities’, ‘interest films’ or ‘travel films’ depending on their subject matter. The term ‘documentary’ was first coined by John Grierson in 1926 (Barsam & Monahan, 2010, p. 66). Aufderheide (2007, p. 3) says, John Grierson defined documentary as the “artistic representation of actuality”. However, Barsam and Monahan (2010, p. 66) point out that after Grierson started making documentaries he described the approach as the “creative treatment of actuality.” They (Barsam and Monahan, 2010, p. 66) consider Robert J. Flaherty’s pioneering documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922) to demonstrate the “complex relationship between documentary filmmaking and objective truth”. This ethnographic documentary not only “included authentic ‘documentary’ footage but also incorporated a great deal of staged re-enactments”, where Flaherty “reportedly encouraged the Inuit subjects to use older, more ‘traditional’ hunting and fishing techniques for the film instead of their then-current practices” (Barsam and Monahan, 2010, p. 66). Winston (2011a, p. 85) says that *Nanook of the North* is “conventionally considered as the first documentary” which achieved “amazing commercial success”. Grierson (Winston, 2011a, p. 85) in a New York newspaper review wrote about the ‘documentary value’ of Flaherty’s second documentary *Moana: A Tale of South Seas*. After returning to UK from USA, Grierson established a movement which prompted in “making short films for a variety of organizations from the post office (e.g. *Nightmail*, 1936, Harry Watt and Basis Wright) to the energy utility companies (e.g. *Housing Problems*, 1935, Edgar Anstey and Arthur Elton)” (Winston, 2011a, p. 85).

## Movements

The changes in documentary continued with the advancement of filmmaking. It was Grierson who introduced a form called city symphonies in “First Principles of Documentary” produced in the late 1920s until the 1930s, particularly in the works of Walther Ruttmann’s *Berlin, Symphony of the/a City* (1927) and Dziga Vertov’s *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) (Beattie, 2004, p. 35). The cycle of the city symphony films bore a testimony to the “shift in cultural outlook associated with documentary”, that began with Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand’s *Manhatta* (1921), which “took a modernist look at metropolitan life” of Manhattan (Musser, 1996, p. 90). This documentary was unnoticed in America, but due to its wide circulation in Europe, it may have influenced the theme of Alberto Cavalcanti’s *Rien que les heures* (‘Only the hours’, 1926), which focused on “cosmopolitan Paris, often contrasting rich and poor”, as well as Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927), that refuses to “humanize the city” and “asks the spectator to view the film abstractly and metaphorically” (Musser, 1996, p. 91). Hence, the city symphony movement jumped from USA to France, to Germany, and to Russia where it influenced Michail Kaufman to make *Moskva*

(Moscow, 1927) (Musser, 1996, p. 91). However it was Kaufman's brother, better known as Dziga Vertov, who became internationally renowned with the city symphony film, as mentioned earlier, *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek kinoapparatom*, 1929), which is a "manifesto for the documentary film and a condemnation of the fiction feature film" that he fought "against in his various manifestos and writings" (Musser, 1996, p. 93). But before this famous documentary film, Vertov started realizing the power of cinema with *Cine-Pravda* (Vertov, 2007, p. 6). Subsequently the *Cine-Eye* movement began, which is an "attempt to create a manifesto for a grassroots movement of cine-journalists whose purpose was to transform society, along with relations to creativity and technology" (Vertov, 2007, p. 15).

In the meanwhile, 'Free Cinema' movement emerged in Britain in the 1950s which included the work of Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz (Corner, 2008, p. 14). The Free Cinema "was created to combat the seriousness of the Griersonian oeuvre, with topics such as a teenage dance (*Momma Don't Allow*, 1955, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson) (Winston, 2011a, p. 87). The documentary seemed to stop with the decline of the Free Cinema movement towards the end of the 1950s despite its impact of cinema and television (see Corner, 2008, pp. 14-15).

Gradually there was a shift in free cinema of UK (1950s) and cinema verite of France (late 1950s) to the new documentary movement in America in the 1960s (see Dixon & Foster, 2008). According to Dixon and Foster, (2008, p. 280), "this new method of cinema verite, known as 'direct cinema' in Britain, became the dominant documentary style of the 1960s", where the crucial rule "was not to interfere, to keep shooting even when things got dull", because unanticipated things could happen, and to stick with the "subject all the time for total emotional and physical intimacy". The fact that there was no narration gave the documentary films a "rough, raw look, which made them seem like newsreels more than anything else" (Dixon and Foster, 2008, p. 280). In other words, direct cinema, popularly known as "fly-on-the-wall" documentary (Winston, 2011b, p. 167), which used handheld 16-mm equipment, is an "observational approach that minimized the interventions of the filmmaker" (Winston, 2011a, p. 88). Dixon and Foster, (2008, p. 79) says the film that started the ball rolling in this movement was "*Primary* (1960), which covered the 1960 U.S. presidential race, made by four men who would become the key players of the new, handheld, sync-sound documentary tradition: Albert Maysles, Robert Drew, D. A. Pennebaker, and Richard Leacock".

### Later Developments

In the 1970s, due to the liberal climate in western counties, documentary filmmaking started exploring riskier topics like prostitution, lesbian and gay issues, race, ethnicity, motherhood, pornography, black women, and so on (see Basu, 2008; Juhasz, 2008; Austin & de Jong, 2008; Panse, 2008; Knudsen, 2008; Holmes & Jermyn, 2008; Couldry, 2008; Corner, 2008). In the 1980s, the analog video started to change and documentary filmmakers started to explore digital video technology and the Web 1.0 (the Internet) in the 1990s, and later on in the 2000s Web 2.0 (social media) as well (see Austin & de Jong, 2008; Birchall, 2008; Juhasz, 2008; Vicente, 2008; Zimmermann, 2008). Meanwhile, in the midst of all these changes, Michael Moore "adopted a satiric tone" in documentary filmmaking, through *Rodger and Me* (1987), which is an "attack on deindustrialization in the United States" (Winston, 2011a, p. 90). His other productions were also quite satirical, controversial and big hits at the box-office as well as in terms of winning awards: *Sicko* (2007), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), just to name a few. However, documentaries are essentially serious in nature and tend to deal with serious issues ranging from human crises to espionage and political sabotage. Despite the fact that Edward Snowden is branded

a whistleblower and a traitor by America for leaking its surveillance tactics of spying on allies by NSA, it was the in America that a documentary on him and his work titled *Citizenfour* that won the 2014 Academy Awards as well as various other awards. The film not only tells the viewers about the dangers of being monitored by modern technology like phone, e-mail, credit card, internet, but also make them feel the impending danger that they are being constantly watched, mainly because of the methodological style of approaching this genre of filmmaking. The approach that Laura Poitras, the director, adopted lends to the feeling that you are in a Matrix movie where you cannot get away from omnipresence of technology that tracks your every movement.

### **Categorizations: Modes, approaches, subgenres**

Documentaries can be categorized into various subgenres. However, different authorities on documentaries have provided lists that are somewhat similar but also differ to a certain extent; some have divided them in terms of subgenres while others have used categories. According to Nichols (2001, p. 99), “every documentary has its own distinct voice”, and “individual voices lend themselves to an *auteur* theory of cinema, while shared voices lend themselves to a genre theory of cinema”. Nichols (2001, p. 99) categorizes documentary films and videos into “six modes of representation that function something like sub-genres of the documentary film genre itself”, as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Nichols’ Categorization of Documentaries**

Sl	Documentary Mode	Period	Major Characteristics	Deficiencies
1	Poetic documentary	1920s	reassemble fragments of the world poetically	lack of specificity, too abstract
2	Expository documentary	1920s	directly address issues in the historical world	overly didactic
3	Observational documentary	1960s	eschew commentary and re-enactment; observe things as they happen	lack of history, context
4	Participatory documentary	1960s	interview or interact with subjects; use archival film to retrieve history	excessive faith in witnesses, naive history, too intrusive
5	Reflexive documentary	1980s	question documentary form, defamiliarize the other modes	too abstract, lose sight of actual issues
6	Performative documentary	1980s	stress subjective aspects of a classically objective discourse	loss of emphasis on objectivity may relegate such films to the avant-garde; “excessive” use of style

(Source: Adapted from Nichols, 2001, p. 138)

Aufderheide (2007) has divided the subgenres of documentaries as in Table 2:

**Table 2: Aufderheide's Categorization of Documentaries<sup>3</sup>**

Sl.	Categories	Examples
1	Public Affairs	In UK, the BBC launched <i>Special Enquiry</i> (1952-57) and <i>Panorama</i> ; in USA CBS's <i>See It Now</i> (1951-58), <i>The Selling of the Pentagon</i> (1971), NBC's <i>White Paper</i> , ABC's <i>Close-Up!</i> (1960-63)
2	Government Propaganda	<i>Triumph of the Will</i> (1935) by Leni Riefenstahl; <i>London Can Take It</i> (1940) by Humphrey Jennings; <i>Song of Ceylon</i> (1934) by Basil Wright; <i>Why We Fight</i> (1943) by Frank Capra
3	Advocacy	<i>The Spanish Earth</i> (1937) by Ivens; <i>The Battle of Chile</i> (1975-79) by Patricio Guzman; Brave New Films's <i>Iraq for Sale</i> (2006), Citizens United's <i>Border War</i> (2006)
4	Historical	Wars— <i>The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty</i> (1927) by Esfir Shub, <i>The Civil War</i> (1990) series by Ken Burns; Biographies—Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman's <i>Derrida</i> (2002); Cultural memories—David Wolper's <i>Hollywood: The Golden Years</i> (1961)
5	Ethnographic	Flaherty's <i>Nanook of the North</i> (1922); <i>Chang</i> (1927) by Merian C. Cooper
6	Nature/ Environmental	Davis Guggenheim's <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> (2006); Steve Irwin's <i>The Crocodile Hunter</i> television series (an international hit until his death in 2006); Luc Jacquet's highly popular international hit <i>March of the Penguins</i> (2005); Disney's nature— <i>Seal Island</i> (1948), <i>The Living Desert</i> (1953)

(Source: Adapted from Aufderheide, 2007, pp. 56-124)

Barsam and Monahan (2010, p. 66) says that “historically, documentary films have been broken into four basic approaches: factual, instructional, persuasive, and propaganda”.

Even though ‘mockumentary’, has not been categorized as a subgenre of documentary, it could be considered as one. Mockumentaries are “tongue-in-cheek fake documentaries”, and the “humour” depend “on the audience being able to identify the conventions”, for example Rob Reiner's *This Is Spinal Tap!* (1984), *Best in Show* (2000) and *A Mighty Wind* (2003) (Aufderheide, 2007, pp. 13-14). On a serious note, a truly chilling movie made in a mockumentary fashion is Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez's *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) (see Nichols, 2001, p. 23). Much of the impact of mockumentaries or ‘pseudo-documentaries,’ says Nichols (2001, p. 23), “depends on their ability to coax at least partial belief from us that what we see is a documentary because that is what we are told we see”.

### Bangladeshi Perspectives

After the partition in 1947, Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan. Nazir Ahmed, who was assigned by the Pakistan Central Government, covered the “visit of Mohammad Ali Jinnah in East Bengal in March 1948” and produced a newsreel, which was the “first film of newly created East Pakistan”.<sup>4</sup> The documentary film was titled *In Our Midst*, and had subtitle in three languages, namely, Bangla, English and Urdu (Mohiuddin, 2014, p. 35). Nazir Ahmed, who was the pathfinder of filmmaking in Dhaka, subsequently made a 4-reeled documentary in 1954 called *Salamat* (Mohiuddin, 2014, p. 35). The first film of the newly created Bangladesh was Zahir Raihan's documentary *Stop Genocide* (1971), the success of which prompted the provisional government

<sup>3</sup> The table was formed for easy comprehension of the various categories

<sup>4</sup> In our Midst: First Newsreel. Available at: <http://bangladeshfilmday.weebly.com/in-our-midst.html> Accessed on 02.12.2014

in June 1971 to assign him (i.e. Zahir Raihan) to “produce three more short films *Liberation Fighters* (directed by Alamgir Kabir), *Innocent Millions* (directed by Babul Choudhury), and *A State is Born* (directed by Zahir Raihan)” (Remembering the Legends, 2011).<sup>5</sup>

### Contemporary Bangladeshi Filmmakers <sup>6</sup>

A number of contemporary filmmakers of Bangladesh work in both genres, namely feature and documentary films. The prominent ones who have made a name for themselves nationally and internationally are as follows:

- Manjare Hassen Murad: Rokeya, *Amader Chheler*, Established Bangladesh Documentary Council
- Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud: *Muktir Gaan*, *Muktir Katha*
- Tanvir Mokammel: *Karnaphulir Kanna*, *Banojatri*, *Swapnobhumi*
- Tareque Shahriar: *Kalighar*
- Yasmin Kabir: *Swadhinata*, *Sheshkriya*
- Shahin Dill-Riaz: *Jibon Jole Bele*, *Lobakhor*

### Issues in Documentaries

The content of documentaries, unlike mockumentaries, is supposed to be based on real life itself and/or real life events and incidents. However, as discussed in the ‘categories’ and ‘subgenres’ sections (see below), the narrative perspectives, interpretations, propaganda, or ethnographic viewpoint may vary. When considered from a journalistic perspective, such viewpoints make documentaries one dimensional, and therefore biased and unreliable in terms of objectively capturing truth on camera. Chowdhury and Jhuma’s (2014) study of two documentaries on the Phulbari coal mine issue suggests that the views of the filmmakers vary; seven people died and 300 were injured when the community rose up against Asia Energy in Phulbari, Bangladesh, on 26 August 2006. Their (Chowdhury & Jhuma, 2014) analysis reveals that in the documentary titled *Dudh Koyla (Coal Milk)* directed by Molla Sagor, people did “not want any coal mine in their locality” (p. 107); whereas the other documentary *Phulbari* directed by Philip Gain and Ronald Haidar shows that the people are “against the open pit project” but “not against general extraction of coal” (p. 108). It seems that both of the documentaries portrayed a partial dimension of so-called truth, based on arguably a preconceived agenda or notion.

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<sup>5</sup> Remembering the Legends. (26.03.2011). Available at: [http://newagebd.com/newspaper1/archive\\_details.php?date=2011-03-26&nid=13049](http://newagebd.com/newspaper1/archive_details.php?date=2011-03-26&nid=13049) Accessed on 02.12.2014

<sup>6</sup> This section has been compiled from the following sources:

- Breaking new grounds: Grand Prix in Spain goes to 'Jibon-Jole-Bele'. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2003/09/05/d30905140273.htm>
- Extraordinary people make Dill-Riaz's films. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/extraordinary-people-make-dill-riazs-films/a-16397384>
- Tanvir Mokammel to make docu film on Dhaleshwari River. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://newagebd.net/47101/tanvir-mokammel-to-make-docu-film-on-dhaleshwari-river/#sthash.ZKvd3B91.dpbs>
- Tareque Masud was a unique maker: seminar. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: [http://newagebd.com/old\\_archives/detail.php?date=2013-12-08&nid=75873#.VH7c5NKUd8Q](http://newagebd.com/old_archives/detail.php?date=2013-12-08&nid=75873#.VH7c5NKUd8Q)
- Tareque Sharier with his great work 'The Black House' (Kalighar). Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://chhobi-banai.blogspot.com/>
- Yasmin Kabir's 'A Certain Liberation' adjudged the best documentary film Pallab Bhattacharya, New Delhi. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2004/02/13/d402131403102.htm>

## Methodology of Documentary

Making a documentary is a creative exercise that follows qualitative research paradigm. Even though fact and figures are important in making a documentary, ultimately it is the creator's point of view that is portrayed on the screen. Schickel (2003) points this out in a sarcastic manner:

A documentary is an arrangement (or, if it includes historical footage, a rearrangement) of nonfictional film, structured to support the pre-existing ideas of the filmmaker. Only the terminally stupid or childishly innocent imagine that anyone making a documentary film aspires to objective truth.

(Schickel, 2003)

## Framework: Theoretical underpinnings

In order to make a documentary, it is important to have schematic knowledge of the history, as well as the classifications or categorizations of this genre of filmmaking. Hence, to prepare for this project, many documentaries were watched and analyzed in terms of the various modes (Nichols, 2001, 2010)<sup>7</sup>, approaches (Barsam & Monahan, 2010)<sup>8</sup> and subgenres (Aufderheide, 2007)<sup>9</sup> of documentary filmmaking. While making *Life after Grey* (2015), the theoretical underpinnings were constantly kept in mind. In order to get a vibe for *Life after Grey* (2015), as part of my research orientation, I particularly watched a number of documentary films on rape and prostitution namely: *I Will not be Silenced* (2015), *Sex Slaves of Bangladesh* (2015), *United Kingdom's Daughter* (2015), *India's Daughter* (2015), *Daughters of Mother India* (2015), *A Crime Unpunished: Bangladeshi Gang Rape* (2015), *Pakistan's Hidden Shame* (2014), *Sri Lanka's Unfinished War* (2013), *Whores' Glory* (2011), *Taboo: Prostitution* (2010), *The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan* (2009), *Bringing Justice to Women of Burma* (2011), and *The Day My God Died* (2004).

According to Nichols' framework (2001, 2010) *Life after Grey* (2015) could be categorized as having adopted a predominantly 'Expository' mode, which is somewhat 'Participatory' and 'Poetic' in orientation as well. The expository mode in this film endeavours to depict an objective portrayal of ordeals that the underage girls experienced. The participatory and the poetic modes were kept to a minimum, in order to foreground the unprejudiced version of the stories of these girls. This form of empowerment seems to provide the girls with latitude of freedom to express the full range of their emotions. In terms of Barsam and Monahan's (2010) categorizations, this documentary adopted chiefly the 'Factual' approach to documentary making, and to some extent the 'Persuasive' approach as well. With respect to Aufderheide's (2007) classification, *Life after Grey* could be roughly put in 'Public Affairs' subgenre of documentary discourse.

In order to make *Life after Grey* (2015), the following methodological framework was followed:

1. Documentary Proposal
2. Production Logbook
3. Critical Reflection—Self-evaluation
4. Screening
5. Seize the Day

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<sup>7</sup> Nichols' (2001) modes of documentary: Poetic, Expository, Observational, Participatory, Reflexive, Performative

<sup>8</sup> Barsam and Monahan's (2010) four basic approaches of documentary: Factual, Instructional, Persuasive, Propaganda

<sup>9</sup> Aufderheide's (2007) subgenres of documentary: Public Affairs, Government Propaganda, Advocacy, Historical, Ethnographic, Nature/Environmental

## Step-by-step guide to documentary making

In this section a step-by-step procedure is provided to first-time documentary filmmakers, based on the above methodological framework.

### Documentary proposal

It is essential to prepare a proposal before embarking upon any type of documentary filmmaking. Such a proposal entails some specific features: title, objectives, research outline, theoretical approach(es), timeline, and budget. The synopsis of the proposal is provided in Appendix-1.

### Production Logbook:

Production logbook (hereafter PL) may seem tedious to maintain; however, it is an integral part of documentary filmmaking. PL is a valuable asset as it connects all the ideas and activities throughout the entire process of the filmmaking project—from the inception to the end. In other words, it weaves a common thread through all the stages of a documentary—idea generation, budget, research, planning (production), communication, pre-production, production, follow ups, and post production.

### Idea Generation

a. *Activity*: Idea was generated on May 29, 2015. Before starting brainstorming for ideas, my partner and I decided that our topic should be on a social issue. When we met on 29 May 2015, we narrowed down our ideas to two themes:

—Rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration of underage girls pushed into flesh-trade

—Transgender inequality

b. *Challenge(s)*: It was challenging to finalize a particular theme, as both of them seemed interesting given the social situation of Bangladesh, and were timely. Both of the themes were of social concern to the common people and the government.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: First theme (Rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration) was selected because in the Bangladeshi context it is a more serious social issue, and had a deeper implication. Furthermore, I had connections with an NGO called Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), who could assist us with our project. It would have been difficult to get in-depth interviews from transgendered communities without any connections.

### Budget

a. *Activity*: A minimalist project budget was drafted, which came to approximately Tk25,000/= (see budget in the proposal).

b. *Challenge(s)*: Sponsorship for the project could not be acquired. Even BNWLA, the assisting partner of this documentary film, was unable to help us monetary-wise. Besides the daily expenditure proposed in the proposal-budget, the two-day unanticipated trip to Gopalganj while chasing a criminal, incurred extra expenses.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: Seeing no avenue to secure sponsorship and reduce our expenditure, we decided to self-finance the project.

## Research

a. *Activity*: The research was divided into two parts, based on the individual areas of expertise. My partner, the technical expert, conducted filmmaking-centric research while I took care of the social issue-centric part of the documentary. In order to focus on the social issue part of our film, I explored the following: journal articles, news clippings, BNWLA materials (reports, newsletters, publications, case studies, news clippings, etc.), as well as many documentaries on rape and prostitution<sup>10</sup> that dealt with subthemes like rescue, rehabilitation, repatriation, and reintegration. My partner explored the techniques of documentary filmmaking based on social issues.

b. *Challenge(s)*: It was difficult to get research materials from BNWLA before *Eid-ul-Fitr* (one of the biggest Muslim celebrations) vacation, as their office personnel were overburdened with lots of work before the vacation. Consequently, they could not provide us with the relevant materials for research before Eid vacation.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: Alternative sources were used to gather the necessary information by using online journal service provided by the digital libraries, namely East West University and Independent University, Bangladesh.

## Planning (production)

a. *Activity*: While planning for the production of documentary film, a thorough literature research was conducted and the necessary research materials were gathered from online libraries, news clippings, and BNWLA's case files. The total number of days that would be employed to shoot the documentary was decided at this stage. Furthermore, plans were made to travel to and shoot at Daulatdia, the unofficial world's biggest brothel town.

b. *Challenge(s)*: BNWLA could not provide the case files on time due to approaching *Eid-ul-Fitr* vacation. Permission to shoot at Daulatdia was not granted due to breach of contract by previous organizations in protecting the identities of prostitutes and underage girls.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: The necessary information that was needed from the case files was gathered by talking over the phone with the relevant BNWLA personnel. The hardcopies of the case files were collected after the *Eid-ul-Fitr* vacation. My partner and I had to make an executive decision regarding the Daulatdia shoot. The main objective of going there was to practically show rescue part in our documentary. We got our interviewees to emphasize the rescue and repatriation part in their interviews; thus somewhat fulfilling our objective without going to Daulatdia.

## Communication and Shooting

a. *Activity*: It was extremely difficult to communicate with BNWLA. Initially I contacted the President of this NGO. After cancelled appointments, many e-mails, SMSs and telephone conversations, my partner and I got a face-to-face appointment at her house. After that we went to the BNWLA office to meet the Executive Director. Once the negotiations were complete, the shooting phase started, which lasted for five days:

- Day 1: BNWLA premises
- Day 2: BNWLA shelter home at Gazipur

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<sup>10</sup> *I Will not be Silenced* (2015), *Sex Slaves of Bangladesh* (2015) *United Kingdom's Daughter* (2015), *India's Daughter* (2015), *Daughters of Mother India* (2015), *A Crime Unpunished: Bangladeshi Gang Rape* (2015), *Pakistan's Hidden Shame* (2014), *Sri Lanka's Unfinished War* (2013), *Whores' Glory* (2011), *Taboo: Prostitution* (2010), *The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan* (2009), *Bringing Justice to Women of Burma* (2011), *The Day My God Died* (2004).

- Day 3: Again BNWLA office;
- Days 4-5: Maksudpur, Gopalganj—journey to and from Dhaka, ferry terminal, car, rest-house, police station, etc.

*b. Challenge(s):* It was extremely difficult to get appointments with BNWLA. It was difficult to determine the shooting dates of the film at their (BNWLA's) premises before *Eid*. They wanted the shooting to begin after *Eid*—but that would be too late for us as we had deadlines to meet.

*c. Overcoming challenge(s):* My partner and I were relentlessly persistent in getting appointment with BNWLA by explaining the urgency of meeting the deadlines of our project.

### Pre-production <sup>11</sup>

*a. Activity:* My partner and I had to go for location recce at the BNWLA office and their shelter home in Gazipur, as well as to make a list of all the equipment that would be needed for the shoot.

*b. Challenge(s):* Due to deadlines, we did not get time to go for location recce.

*c. Overcoming challenge(s):* Since we did not have much opportunity for location recce, we went prepared with basic three-point interview lighting. To ensure we capture little fleeting moments and body language of our interviewees we took a two-camera set-up. For audio, we took with us two lavalier microphones for primary audio, a boom microphone for secondary audio, and a shotgun microphone as a backup. Lastly, for outdoor shooting we took with us a 24 inch and a 51 inch reflector.

### Production <sup>12</sup>

*a. Activity:* We shot at several locations over a period of five days: BNWLA office, BNWLA shelter home at Gazipur, journey to and from Maksudpur, Gopalganj, ferry terminal, car, rest-house, police station, my partner's house, etc.

*b. Challenge(s):* On numerous occasions our camera overheated during outdoor shoots. Another problem of outdoor shoot was dust accumulation in camera sensor.

*c. Overcoming challenge(s):* In order to overcome overheating and dust accumulation during outdoor shoot, a secondary camera was used, until the primary was fixed.

### Follow ups

*a. Activity:* During follow-ups, footage and narrative planning were reviewed.

*b. Challenge(s):* Since the theme of the documentary film was based on sensitive issues, permission had to be constantly sought from BNWLA to use the footages that were shot.

*c. Overcoming challenge(s):* A constant state of negotiation was established with BNWLA to assure them that ethical boundaries would not be breached to put lives and identities of the girls (i.e. the subjects) at risk.

### Post Production

*a. Activity:* During post-production the following things were done: editing, re-editing, sound-editing, voiceover as well as writing and correction of the narrative.

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<sup>11</sup> Wafi Aziz Sattar helped to write the pre-production section

<sup>12</sup> Wafi Aziz Sattar helped to write the production section

b. *Challenge(s)*: Due to shortage of time, major obstacle was to meet the deadline. Furthermore, during post-production, I met with a motorcycle accident, and my motorcycle was seized and kept at the police station for a couple of days.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: In order to meet all deadlines, I was fortunate enough to be able to take a lot of leave from my day job, and worked overtime with my partner, which included numerous sleepless nights.

### Critical reflection: Self-evaluation

While critiquing one's work, the creator is the biggest critic. A critical reflection of *Life after Grey* reflects my experience of looking at the video production process, and the strengths and weaknesses of the final product.

The synopsis posted on the poster of our documentary goes like this (see Figure 1):

*Watch the shocking stories of underage girls pushed into the flesh-trade. Listen to how they fought against all odds to survive and regain their identity. Life after Grey is a gripping film that gives a resounding voice to the voiceless of our society.*



Figure 1: Poster of *Life after Grey* (Sattar & Haque, 2015)

Before embarking upon the journey of making a documentary film on rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of underage girls who were raped and/or pushed into prostitution, I did not think that our subjects would be so forthcoming and spontaneous in voicing out their opinions. I feared that the concept of stigmatization would inhibit the girls from freely expressing their stories. I was overwhelmed with the courage that these girls displayed in telling their stories. They wanted to be heard in order to reclaim their lost identities. In the process of doing this, they wanted to regain their lost dignity, if not for anyone else, at least in their own eyes. During the interviews, I felt that these girls were like any other girls who were either deceived or made a mistake, and then trapped by perpetrators. Despite the fact that these girls had experienced intolerable situations ranging from rape and physical abuse to mental trauma, they braved all odds to embrace life. We wanted to capture this on camera by letting them tell their own stories instead of their stories being told by someone else. I think *Life after Grey* (2015) somewhat managed to do this with minimum interference of the documentary filmmakers.

### Strengths

The main objective of *Life after Grey* (2015) was to give voice to the underage victims of sexual abuse. In other words, the goal was to let the girls tell their own stories rather than provide interpreted versions of what happened. In the documentary, the girls did somewhat manage to tell their own stories and express their emotions. The girls were able to talk about the 'grey' part of their lives and what they want to do after their bleak past. This seems to justify the theme of the title, *Life after Grey* (2015). This documentary seems to be able to highlight the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims. Most documentaries on social issues tend to use the participatory mode, thereby making the interviews very structured and professional in nature. Such a manner of interviewing victims does not allow them to voice their opinions and tell their stories; rather, their stories are told by the interviewers. In *Life after Grey* (2015) the interference is kept to a minimal when the girls narrate their individual stories. Furthermore, the stories are not generalized; each story is unique and deserves to be told from the victims' individual points of views. Hence, our approach to making *Life after Grey* (2015) seems to be more holistic in nature. Expository mode of documentary filmmaking was employed, as well as poetic mode to some extent.

One of the other strengths of *Life after Grey* (2015) is that it is not merely a series of interviews after interviews, like in *India's Daughter* (2015), which was highly publicized and controversial, where more than 35 people were interviewed in a 54 minutes documentary. *Life after Grey* (2015) has 7 interviews, and its length is 35 minutes. Unlike other documentaries, the interviews in this film are not clumped together; they are spread throughout the 35 minutes. In between the interviews, there are some footage. This documentary has a linear storyline, which is self-explanatory, with an introduction, body and conclusion. The girls were very forthcoming about expressing their individual stories as well as their aspirations and dreams. In this respect, the documentary has been able to fulfil its objective.

### Weaknesses

The means through which underage girls that are pushed into the flesh trade and are rescued have been explained in *Life after Grey* (2015) through the interviews of some of the girls. Two personnel from BNWLA, who were interviewed, also explain how girls are rescued and repatriated. However, if real rescue could have been shown in the film, it would have been more exciting and thrilling. That was the original intention. This was planned with BNWLA and MMS (Mukti Mohila Samity)<sup>13</sup>, that is, to go to Daulatdia on Friday 10 July 2015 in order to rescue some girls. However, on the eve of 9 July MMS shelved this plan. They justified their action by saying that due to breach of contract by two previous organizations, which had filmed at Daulatdia for their respective documentaries, further permission was not being given to anyone else to take footage. Previously, Vice News had taken explicit footage and aired it on YouTube without hiding the identities of the interviewees. Similarly, another organization took footage and sold it to National Geographic, which was aired in their 5th episode of the series called *Taboo* titled 'Prostitution'; this documentary also showed explicit footage without hiding the identities of the interviewees, and uploaded the programme on YouTube. Due to the complaint received from Daulatdia, permission was not granted for further filming until the situation had calmed down.

The faces of the girls who were interviewed in *Life after Grey* (2015) were not shown, due to ethical and security reasons, as well as our commitment to BNWLA to keep the identity of our

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<sup>13</sup> Another NGO working with BNWLA

respondents hidden. If their faces could have been shown, this documentary would have been even more emotionally gripping and intense, due to the expressive nature of their facial countenances.

### Screening

Screening of a film is a significant part of documentary filmmaking process. It is like a focus group response to a creative production. A specialist audience response is very important in the critiquing process. The audience members during the screening of *Life after Grey* (2015) comprised academics and graduate students from the Department of Media and Communication, as well as a few renowned professional and academic guests specializing in media studies. It is at the screening that the creators get a chance to explain their creation and answer critical questions pertaining to 'why' and 'how' of the creative process. The screening of a documentary film, followed by a 'question and answer' session, in front of an erudite academic audience is a true litmus test for any filmmaker. This exercise provides a conclusion to the entire documentary making process. Without the screening, it may seem that the methodology of documentary production is incomplete.

### Seize the day

When it comes to documentary filmmaking, particularly on sensitive issues, sometimes things do not go according to plan, as has already been mentioned in the 'weaknesses' part of self-reflection section. However, at times windfalls might be thrown your way, and you have to seize the day. While making *Life after Grey* (2015), two such situations materialized and opportunities were taken advantage of. During the first day of negotiation with the Executive Director of BNWLA, 16 girls were rescued from India and were repatriated to Bangladesh. Among them, a few were underage girls. Rescued girls are usually kept only for a couple of days in the makeshift shelter home at the office of BNWLA. As soon as we were informed about the rescue, my partner and I went to BNWLA office the following day with the necessary equipment to interview the girls. We were rather fortunate to get those interviews, which were not in our proposal. Our second windfall materialized on the last day of our expected filming at the office of BNWLA, two days before *Eid-ul-Fitr*. While interviewing one of the personnel, she mentioned that immediately after the interview she would travel to Maksudpur, Gopalganj, a couple of hundred kilometres outside of the capital, to file a case and apprehend the criminal husband of one of the victims. We asked whether we could tag along. She said 'yes', and we jumped at the opportunity. We provided the transport. The journey to Maksudpur, Gopalganj, two days before Eid, with a victim and an NGO staff in order to capture a criminal husband who sold his wife (i.e. the victim) was too tempting to resist. This windfall was also not scripted in our original proposal. It is very important to take such unexpected opportunities, as they can make a documentary much more exciting.

### Conclusion

This paper endeavours to elucidate how theoretical knowledge, practical experience and unforeseen challenges and opportunities may combine in the process of a documentary production. This mechanism was demonstrated through a first-time effort of an actual documentary film *Life after Grey* (2015) from its inception to the final screening. The 21st century has put a camera in almost everyone's hands through mobile and portable devices. So, technically speaking, everyone can claim to be a filmmaker if he/she wishes to do so. However, he/she will obviously make blunders as an amateur without the historical, theoretical and methodical knowledge of documentary filmmaking. Conversely, this does not mean to suggest that those with such knowledge and technical knowhow will be successful every time. When it comes to filmmaking there is no specific formula that can guarantee its success. Despite that, if any first-timer follows the above

procedure in a step-by-step methodological sequence, he/she should be able to avoid some of the major pitfalls of documentary filmmaking.

[Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Wafi Aziz Sattar, who is a young filmmaker, for his in-depth knowledge of the technical aspects of filmmaking. While working on *Life after Grey*, he demonstrated his foresight in overcoming some of the technical glitches which may occur during production and editing stages.]

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## Appendix-1: Synopsis of documentary proposal:

Sl.	Proposal Criteria	Description/justification
1.	Title: " <i>Life After Flesh-Trade</i> " or " <i>Life After Hell</i> " or " <i>Our Girls</i> ", or " <i>Life after Grey</i> "	Summary: This documentary film will be about the life of underage girls who have been deceived into entering the flesh-trade, that is, prostitution. The girls are usually handed over by their parents to trustworthy members of their communities to take them (i.e. the girls) to Dhaka, and get them good jobs. However, these so-called saints/well-wishers sell the girls and/or force them into a life of prostitution. There are certain organizations working in this field to rescue these girls. After being rescued, many parents reject their children due to the fear of stigmatization. This film will look at what happens to these underage girls after being rescued from being enslaved in the flesh-trade industry. It will mainly focus on three Rs: rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The girls will tell the stories in their own words. The girls will have the latitude of expressing their opinions regarding their past, the flesh-trade industry, the rehabilitation process, and their future ambitions and/or dreams.
2.	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration</li> <li>• giving voice to subalterns</li> </ul>	The main objective is to look at the life of underage girls after being rescued from the flesh-trade industry, by focusing particularly on how they are rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Through the mechanism of rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration this film would like to give the girls a voice to express themselves and tell their individual stories.
3.	Research outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books, journals, news articles</li> <li>• Documentaries on prostitution - local &amp; foreign</li> <li>• BNWLA library, newsletters, annual and quarterly reports</li> </ul>	The research on the above topic began from the 3 <sup>rd</sup> week of May. Books, journals, news articles as well as various documentaries on prostitution (local & foreign) were reviewed. Furthermore Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) reports and books from their library will also be reviewed.

Sl.	Proposal Criteria	Description/justification
4.	<p>Theoretical Approach(es):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mode: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Expository (mainly)</li> <li>➤ Participatory (partly)</li> <li>➤ Poetic (partly)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Audio-Visual Representation Technique: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Actuality</li> <li>➤ Audio/Visual Exposition</li> <li>➤ Direct Interviews</li> <li>➤ Video Montage</li> <li>➤ Narration</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expected Outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hermeneutic</li> <li>➤ Experiential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This documentary film will predominantly adopt the Expository mode, but will also have elements of Participatory and Poetic modes.</li> <li>• Technically, the film will be in actuality and have no figments of fiction in its thread. The audio/visual exposition will serve to establish the theme of the film at the very beginning, and through various interviews conducted with the victims, we will have a firsthand understanding of the experiences of life before, during, and after the dark days in the sex trade. The visuals will be further strengthened through the creation of video montages created using footages shot separately from the places similar to the victims' previous abode(s) during their life in the sex trade.</li> <li>• The expected outcome from the film is such that the main subjects—the victims—will guide viewers through their emotional journey; thereby, the notion of approach will be hermeneutic in nature for the experiential knowledge gained from the film to be absolute.</li> <li>• In the post-production stage, full anonymity of the victims will be ensured by blurring out their faces and not using their real names in Lower Thirds (Astons). In this way, their identity can be protected.</li> </ul>
5.	<p>Timeline - 12 weeks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Phase: 6 weeks</li> <li>• Negotiation with BNWLA: 1 week</li> <li>• Location Recce: 1 week</li> <li>• Planning: 1 week</li> <li>• Filming: 2 weeks</li> <li>• Post-Production: 1 week</li> </ul>	<p>The approximate timeline for the entire project to be completed in is approximately 12 weeks. 6 weeks will be spent on researching the subject matter in both a global and local context; 1 week will be spent in negotiation with BNWLA to seek their permission and support for conducting the interviews and using their premises, followed by location recce and plan for filming. At least 2 weeks will be required (for multiple visits) to ensure all necessary footages. Post-production will take approximately 1 week. If things go according to plan, it is expected to be completed by the second week of August 2015.</p>

Sl.	Proposal Criteria	Description/justification
6.	<p>Budget (in BDT) - 25,000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport: 5,000</li> <li>• Food: 5,000</li> <li>• Production Assistants: 3,000</li> <li>• Post-Production:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Video Editing: 3,000</li> <li>➤ Subtitling: 2,000</li> <li>➤ Voiceover: 1,000</li> <li>➤ Audio Mastering: 2,000</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Miscellaneous: 2,500</li> <li>• Contingency: 1,500</li> </ul>	<p>The justification for the budget is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport: During the filming period, equipment has to be taken to different shooting locations. Taxi-cabs will have to be hire to transport the equipment safely to various shooting sites for a number of days.</li> <li>• Food: Lunch and snacks will be needed during shooting at different locations</li> <li>• Production Assistants: The Production Assistants need to be compensated for their help</li> <li>• Post Production:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Video Editing: The Video Editing personnel need to be compensated for their help</li> <li>➤ Voiceover: The Voiceover Artist needs to be compensated for his/her help</li> <li>➤ Audio-mastering: The Audio Mastering personnel need to be compensated for their help</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Miscellaneous: There might be a few unanticipated expenditure which were not considered in advance</li> <li>• Contingency: In case the budget exceeds the limit due to unforeseen reasons</li> </ul>

*(Prepared by Wafi Aziz Sattar and Muhammed Shabriar Haque)*

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