Unearthing a sense of cosmopolitan social justice in Middle Eastern students through an analysis of media language.

Naghmana Ali
American University of Sharjah
United Arab Emirates

This paper explores how students' research exercises on analyzing the language used in media could evoke, through class discussions, a sense of social justice with regards to ontological issues such as human rights and political polarities. Critical Discourse Analysis is epistemologically conceived as a three-dimensional framework in which the first dimension is that of textual analysis, the second dimension examines discourses as conduits of ideology, and finally the third dimension explores social practices as interpretations of hegemonic ideology. In view of the three-dimensional framework, students conduct sociolinguistic discussions based on their research projects and evoke a classroom curriculum that articulates their individual sense of social justice across transnational spaces. This paper is premised on the notion that in this globalized world it is important to inculcate a sense of cosmopolitan social justice in students whereby they can try and understand opposing worldviews from their own cultural vantage point.

Keywords: Critical discourse Analysis, curriculum and instruction, cosmopolitanism, globalization, social justice, human rights

Introduction

Dubai has often been blamed in the international media for its violation of labor rights or for its rampant trafficking of sex workers from neighboring countries, but what one fails to recognize is that the United Arab Emirate (UAE), a nascent oil-rich country with Dubai as its crown jewel, is the world' s best response to the 21st century globalized world. Home to expatriates from North America and Europe, business people from neighboring Arab countries, and blue-collar workers from the neighboring Asian countries, the UAE has made Multiculturalism and diversity its hallmark. With diversity comes an intermingling of cultures and viewpoints, negotiation of identities, and a certain sense of prevalent social justice that every ethnic group is entitled to.

Before speaking about the assignments in a course called Language in Society, which are the subject of this article, the author would attempt to unpack the title of this article that speaks to the idea of pushing the boundaries of what constitutes social justice in a mosaic culture of the UAE. For a holistic discussion the vantage points of students coming from different cultural backgrounds should be factored in.

Theoretical Framework

As classrooms, in a sense, are a microcosm of the society at large, students bring with them latent notions of what is right and wrong. Arguing for the crucial importance of critical pedagogy, which is the initial step towards developing critical language awareness in students, Wink (2005) states: "We in education are a mirror of society that is more and more polarized." (p. 165) Hence, educators, who are reflective practitioners, should encourage the development of critical language awareness to engender a socially just and humane society. A dialogic classroom interaction with the teacher and with their peers could effectively 'unearth' their critical awareness about language and what matters most to them in their negotiation of identities as globalized citizens in a democratic society, especially in an English as a Second Language (ESL) environment. "Critical Language Awareness (CLA) [is] an urgently needed element in language education. CLA is I believe, coming to be a prerequisite for effective democratic citizenship, and should therefore be seen as an entitlement for citizens…" (Fairclough, 1998, p.3). Critical language awareness and critical pedagogy are invested with meaningful empowerment for both the educators and the students alike when classroom discourses are negotiated between them. (L. Andrews, 2006; S. Andrews, 2007; Fairclough, 1992, 2001; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Guilherme, 2002; James & Garrett, 1992; Janks, 2010; Lippi-Green, 1997; Reagan, 2006; van Lier, 1995). It is, as Wink (2000) argues, " a process that enables teachers and learners to join together in asking fundamental questions about knowledge, justice, and equity in their own classroom, school, and community" (p.71)

Critical theorists (L. Andrews, 2006; S. Andrews, 2007; Fairclough, 1992, 2001; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Guilherme, 2002; James & Garrett, 1992; Janks, 2010; Lippi-Green, 1997; Reagan, 2006; van Lier, 1995) are concerned with issues of power and justice and the ways that race, economy, class, gender, religion, education and sexual orientation construct, reproduce or transform social systems. They believe that thought is mediated by historically constructed power relations, that facts are never neutral but embedded in context, and that some groups are privileged over others, which entitles them to a greater share in resources. Another belief that critical theorists hold is that one of the most powerful forms of oppression is internalized hegemony, which includes both coercion and consent (Gramsci, 2000) and language in the form of discourse is central in the formation of subjectivities and subjugation. Thus, discourses always have social and political underpinnings that are saturated with power relations. Critical language

Study (CLS) Fairclough, (1998) states, "highlights how language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often unaware of." (p.7)

Fairclough (1995a, 1995b) outlines a theoretical framework for Critical Discourse Analysis, which includes an analysis of text, interactions, and social practices at the local, institutional, and societal level. In other words, his analytical framework consists of 3 levels of analysis: the text, the discursive practice, and the sociocultural practice (1995a). He further explains the three dimensions of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as: "description of the text; interpretation of the interaction processes, and their relationship to the text; and explanation of how the interaction process relates to the social action" (Fairclough, 1998, p.11)

Analyzing media language as discourse, Fairclough (1995b) looks into the question of "how the mass media affect and are affected by power relations within the social system…" (p. 12). Critical theorists recognize the power of mass media to act as conduits for disseminating a particular ideology to its audience. Van Dijk (1995) defines Ideologies as follows:

> Ideologies are basic frameworks of social cognition, shared by members of social groups, constituted by relevant selections of sociocultural values, and organized by an ideological schema that represents the self-definition of a group. Besides their social function of sustaining the interests of groups, ideologies have the cognitive function of organizing the social representations (attitudes, knowledge) of the group, and thus indirectly monitor the group-related social practices, and hence also the text and talk of members. (p. 248)

Thus analyzing newspapers' discourse reflects the ideology of that society. Van Dijk (1988, 1991) proposes 'the social-cognitive model' which provides a link between textual analysis of newspaper articles and their corresponding sociocultural milieu. He takes into account the thematic structure—the macrostructure of a text and its overall organization with regards to themes and topics—as well as its schematic structure—the microstructure which is the way a particular news report is ordered with its various parts such as a headline, a lead, an events element (and its syntactic and semantic relation between propositions)—to convey the processes of news production and comprehension as they pertain to the wider social practices they are embedded in.

'Cosmopolitanism,' the word qualifying 'social justice' in the title of this article, denotes an idea that all human beings are linked by virtue of their membership in a shared cosmos. The term 'cosmopolitan' derives from the Greek kosmopolites, or citizen of the world. So while recognizing the influence of one's cultural imperatives on one's identity people owe a certain responsibility to others of different culture (Appiah, 2005, 2006, Nussbaum, 1997 a, b). Cosmopolitanism differs from multiculturalism and pluralism because it does not seek to preserve already formed communities. Hollinger (2002) believes that "Cosmopolitans are specialists in the creating of the new, while cautious about destroying the old; pluralists are specialists in the conservation of the old while cautious about creating the new." (Pp. 231–232)

A Cosmopolitan sensibility in education also has pedagogical implications. Hansen (2008) posits the notion of Curriculum that is generated in classroom interactions between teachers and students as a Cosmopolitan inheritance because it promotes 'critical receptivity' in students, rather than a prescriptive content.

Congruent with the globalized concept of fluid identities Cosmopolitanism as an ideology seeks to encourage emerging spaces for new cultural and social configurations, which by necessity

entails understanding others' viewpoints yet recognizing a commitment to a sense of shared social justice. A limited version of a definition of social justice could be "giving to each what he or she is due" but justice on a wider scale is a set of universal principles which guide people in judging what is right and what is wrong, no matter what culture and society they live in. Social justice is a term replete with issues of inequality in society based on race, color, gender, and political affiliations. In a nutshell, endeavors to ensure social justice for everyone are about preventing human rights abuses and encouraging adherence to international human right laws.

My teaching context and the Assignment
I (henceforth 'Author') teach at an American accredited Liberal Arts university near Dubai where the undergraduate students range between the ages of 18-22. Since the course under discussion called Language in Society is a humanities' elective, the students can take it even when they are about to graduate. They come from different Arab nationalities such as Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Libyan, as well as Emiratis. There is also a sprinkling of students from the Indian sub-continent. It is on the whole an ESL environment.

Channeling students' project discussions through certain parameters, in my experience, encourages students to generate critical arguments around a topic. This is in congruence with Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding where he posits that the Zone of Proximal Development is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance..." (1978, p. 86).

Since one of the course objectives of Language in Society is to 'Critique linguistic bias in texts', and the other is to 'Evaluate the power of language in shaping opinions' the course deals with such topics as 'language and media' and 'language and politics' which encourage in students the skills of critically analyzing texts with respect to the context and the ideologies at work. The parameters that were set for their end of the term paper were therefore as follows:

Ethics and Social justice: An Assignment about Critical Thinking and Critical Language Awareness

•   Pick out two events reported in a newspaper/magazine, or aired on a news channel that in your view violate the norms of ethics and social justice. Indicate clearly what is the underlying ideology at work in the article. The topics you could attempt to look at are: crimes against humanity, racism, gender bias, political allegiances etc.

In light of the concepts presented in the chapters entitled 'Language and Politics' and 'Language and Media' explain critically your views on how the news/article is presented and how it could have been presented if a sense of ethics and social justice were to be preserved. Please use some of the concepts learned in the two chapters (Language and Media, Language and Politics). The concepts are:
•   -Tools for persuasion: us/them; rhetoric; appeals to emotion, logic, and ethics; metaphor; simile; rule of three, parallelism; euphemism and dyseuphemism.
•   -Presuppositions and implicature
•   -Michel Foucault's notions of 'competing discourses', dominant discourses' and hegemonic ideologies
•   -Transitivity

- •   Norman -Fairclough's idea of 'degrees of presence'—back-grounding and foregrounding news items
- •   -Van Dijk's ideological square
- •   -Power/knowledge

Media language analysis as done by some students in response to the assignment
 The assignment was done in an essay form by all students and then were presented to class on power point slides followed by discussions on the content of the newspaper articles as well as the application of sociolinguistic concepts learned during the course, to these analyses. The students were given the option to work either in pairs or individually. Owing to the limited scope of this paper only the major points as they transpired in 4 of these essays are enumerated below in students' own words.

"Story 1: Sati. Article 1: Fanning the flames of love for death
Sati refers to the religious funeral practice of immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, either voluntarily or through coercion. Sati is a practice, which exists in India within the Hindu community.
- •   The title of the article is a metaphor for growing the flames of love by providing air of sacrifice. A romantic image about Sati is being portrayed.
"Prayers rise above the flames as handfuls of spice are tossed into five pits of fire - offerings to a woman of such wifely virtue
she became a goddess"(Goldenberg,1996).
- •   The victim here is described as a "woman of such wifely virtue she became a goddess" - sugarcoated and portrayed as something positive.
- •   There is also an appeal to ethics by portraying the woman who commits sati as virtuous.
- •   Widows are given a derogatory status as being impure and as being sexually irrepressible. This ideology is very sexist as it is only the women who would have to endure such hardship as a widow.
- •   This also relates to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in terms of linguistic relativism
- •   In the article, a devotee is quoted as saying:
  "Our ancestors have been doing it. That is our heritage. How can you stop worshipping something which is a show of strength?"(Goldenberg, 1996).
- •   Van Dijk's ideological square at play. The pronoun "our" as an in-group, and the pronoun "you" shows people who are opposed to sati as an out-group.
- •   The devotee uses a question to persuade the interviewer of his point of view, and this shows a presupposition; that stopping such a "show of strength" is wrong and immoral.
- •   The use of the phrase "a show of strength" is a euphemism, showing it as a virtuous act, and hiding the fact that it is tortuous for the widow to undergo the act of sati.
"This elevation has made her village, her in-laws and her family extremely proud and famous. On Wednesday, there was a massive, and at times frenzied, outpouring of devotion by about 200,000 pilgrims in Deorala"
(M. K., 1987).
- •   He describes the incident as an "elevation" that "has made her village, her in-laws and her family extremely proud and famous".
- •   The choice of the word "elevation" shows that the author sees the incident as something positive that has vertically raised the status of everything related to Roop Kanwar.

•   Rule of three is used to emphasize that everything related to "her" is now elevated, proud and famous

•   The author describe the pilgrims as carrying out a "frenzied, outpouring of devotion", which portrays them as virtuous, devout people

Sati. Article 2: Arrested in Ritual Death, Gandhi Decries the Practice

"Roop Kanwar, 18, was burned with her husband's body in the small village of Deorala - describing the incident as utterly reprehensible and barbaric. The incident is a national shame, and all right thinking people should speak out against those who are glorifying the murder of a young woman"(Kaufman,1987).

•   The fact that he uses the word "burned" rather than saying she burnt herself shows that he believes that the burning was done to her, and she did not do it herself.

•   Appeals to emotion by saying that the incident was "utterly reprehensible and barbaric."

•   The in group "right thinking people should speak out against this" and the out group "those who are glorifying the murder of a young woman"

The author states that

"there was no attempt to stop people from going to Deorala (the sati temple) or worshipping at the site"(Kaufman,1987).

  This reveals a loophole in the Indian law; even though it is illegal to "abet, glorify or attempt to commit sati", there is nothing to say that people may not worship Sati. This allows people to continue to look up to sati as goddesses and this makes it more appealing for women to commit sati.

Conclusion: Through these articles we have discovered that sati still exists in the modern culture of India, and women's basic right to live is violated when they are brutally burned at their husbands' pyre.

We have also seen many examples of a speaker/writer's bias for or against Sati through their use of language. The writers in their article have made use of various rhetorical devices to convince the people with [sic] their mind-set. The problems with Sati need to be resolved, and one way is to close the loophole in the law and establish a ban on worshipping sati. By changing the way we talk about sati, we can change people's mindsets, and then maybe we will finally be free of this atrocious tradition."

Author's comment: While one of the two students who did this analysis was an Indian (and a Hindu by religion), the other one was an Arab Muslim. They tried to understand the Hindu tradition of Sati, which in my view, is in and of itself a Cosmopolitan stance. In accordance with the course assignment's requirement they apply the rhetorical devices such as the rule of three, Sapir and Whorf's hypothesis, Us/Them dichotomy, Van Dyke's ideological square, euphemism and presupposition, used by the reporters to portray the underlying hegemonic ideology of Sati.

The first article according to the analysis seems to be reporting positively, about the religious fervor with which people deify women who commit Sati. The second article, however vehemently apposes it. The students were able to pick up on the underlying assumptions behind both the articles and conclude, alluding to Sapir and Whorf hypothesis that "By changing the way we talk about sati, we can change people's mindsets, and then maybe we will finally be free of this atrocious tradition."

"Story 2: Child marriages and women's rights
Headlines of the articles:
• <u>USA Today:</u> "Child brides around the world sold off like cattle"
"Cattle" and "sold", portraying women as items and stock, with a price tag.
• <u>OnIslam:</u> "Yemen's Child Marriages"
• <u>Emirates 24/7:</u> "Saudi set to curb child marriage"
The use of "curb" indicates an effort to control it, not prohibit it.
• <u>The Elders:</u> "Equality for girls and women: Let us measure up as men"
"Us", a call for unity, and "men", only they can change the situation
Euphemisms:
<u>OnIslam:</u> "There are some cases in which young girls as little as 8 were being allowed to enter a marital union."
"Allowed" gives the impression that the girl wanted to marry and then the parents decided to "allow".
"Marital union" gives the marriage a sense of agreement and unity between the 2 parties, the man and girl. Not once is the word "forced" used in the article. Where is the justice here? Why the use of euphemisms to mitigate these forced child marriages?

Pronouns:
<u>The Elder:</u>
• "Men have a lot to answer for, I cannot deny it. We have built institutions that oppress and harm women, and we justify our practices as 'the way things are' or 'the way things have always been'. Yet, as I always say, I am a prisoner of hope. I do believe that we men can help put a stop to these traditions. We can refuse to participate in them, and we can refuse to condone them. We can go further, and campaign against them."

By using "we", the writer is calling on all men to take a stand and campaign against child marriage, gives "inclusion" to male readers

Gender in language:
<u>The Elder:</u>
He urges men and boys to challenge harmful traditions and protect the rights of girls and women.

• "I want to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women by recognizing the work of young men like Premnath."
The dominant idea is that when men finally stand up for women's rights, women will be liberated from such horrendous acts; the use of male superiority and dominance in the article is emphasized
Degrees of Presence:
<u>Emirate 24/7:</u>
• "The Ministry of Justice has drafted the long-awaited legislation which only restricts such marriages but does not totally ban them as it will give the bride's father the final decision and does not include penalties for offenders."
• "The bride's father can decide on marriage but has to obtain court consent if she is below 16 years old and must present a medical report showing his daughter is eligible for marriage physically and psychologically"

•   " …his daughter must have training for the new family life before she is married"
•   "Under the new draft law, fathers still have the powers to have their daughters married…"
The entire article rotates around the father's decisions, back-grounding the female's position in the marriage and foregrounding the father's actions."

Author's comment: In this assignment the student an Egyptian-American tries to explore the tradition of child marriages in the Middle East. She analyzes headlines and news articles from four different newspapers to explicate concepts such as gender differences in a patriarchal society as portrayed in their discourse, the word choice that insinuates or promotes a certain ideological stance, and the use of pronouns that form the 'in-group' and 'out-group' in delegating authority to men to perpetuate certain social norms. She quotes from the news articles by using different subheading for her analysis, such as: Euphemisms, Pronouns, Gender in language, and Degrees of presence. Thus she adopts a critical stance and picks up on euphemisms and understatements as used in the news article when talking about forced child marriages and violation of women's rights to choose their partners, or even to live a normal childhood.

"Story 3: Boston Marathon bombings
Considered to be the second biggest terrorist act after 9/11, the Boston Marathon bombing is receiving much of the media's attention:
-Al Jazeera and CNN reported the capture of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev
-The one written by CNN sensationalized the news while Al Jazeera's attempted to remain objective.

Titles of the 2 channels
 Al Jazeera: "Second Boston Bombing suspect captured." –Neutral title
CNN: "In the end, Boston bombing suspect done in by a flapping tarp"---Sensationalized
•   "Flapping tarp" is in reference to how the suspect was found hidden in a boat due to a tarp being undone
•   This is ridiculing the efforts of the suspect at hiding from the police, and also dramatizing how his capture happened
•   "Do in" is defined as 'to bring about the defeat or destruction of' (Merriam Webster)
•   The title puts the suspect in a negative light by implying that he was somewhat incompetent at hiding himself.
Conclusion: media should not target him as the "bad guy" but only report the facts accurately

Al Jazeera's Lead:
"Police have captured a 19-year-old ethnic Chechen and a Naturalized US citizen suspected of carrying out the Boston Marathon bombings with his older brother after an intense day-long manhunt that shut down the city."
-Describing him as an "ethnic Chechen" and "a Naturalized US citizen" brings to light that even though he may be from a minority group, he is an American citizen
-The fact that he was a Muslim was back-grounded, although later in the article it was mentioned that the suspects were from a predominantly Muslim region.
Al Jazeera's article focused on the bigger picture:

-      How he was arrested
-      What the public had to say
-      The shootings between the police and the two brothers
-      Quotes from the suspects' family

--Uncle: ashamed, Parents: could not believe

Conclusion: This is an attempt at objectivity by providing both the sides of the story, so Al Jazeera is being ethical here.

Tweet by the Boston Police Department:

"CAPTURED!!! The hunt is over. The search is done. The terror is over. And justice has won. Suspect in custody."

-      The word "captured" and "hunt" make it seem as though the suspect is an animal on the loose.
-      The words "terror" and "justice" reinforce the ideology that Americans will always have their justice and every suspect is a terrorist
-      The tweet is written in parallelism
-      The positive "justice" is juxtaposed with the negative "terror."

CNN's description of how Tsarnaev was found:

-      "Some animal"
-      "Crumpled up in a ball"
-      "pool of blood"

Paints a picture of a man who is wounded and cannot fend for himself.

CNN's description of his capture:

"Hailstorm of gunfire"

"Stand off"

"Police were aware of the danger the armed man posed."

Makes it seem as though he is an extremely dangerous man and the police had the right to fire at him as much as they could

Conclusion:

Objectivity is a rule that journalists must follow. However, we see that this is not always the case. Media, especially in today's world need to let go of their prejudices and ideologies that might affect their reports. It should be up to the people to decide how they feel about something or someone, not the media"

Author's comment: These students, both from Mass Communication Department, analyze in detail the choice of words as well as the political and sensationalized stance that the CNN and the Boston Police Department's tweet assume, as opposed to the relative objectivity adopted by Al Jazeera, an Arab news channel. They further explain in their essay that the use of short value-laden phrases used by CNN and the Boston Police Department's tweet to convey a sense of danger and alarm, while the smoothly flowing sentence structure employed by Al Jazeera merely showed that they were reporting an event, and not sensationalizing it unnecessarily. Hence, the Western media and the Eastern Media took an opposite stance in reporting the same manhunt differently, in view of the ideology held by their respective audience.

"Story 4: "The killing of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011: The US versus the Arab Media Language"
Al Jazeera's lead sentence regarding the killing of Bin Laden reads: "U.S. president Barack Obama said bin Laden, the most-wanted fugitive on the US list, had been killed on Sunday in a US operation in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad, about 61km north of Islamabad."

While Fox news says:
 "Declaring "justice has been done," President Obama announced late Sunday that Osama bin Laden was killed by U.S. forces in Pakistan, marking the end of the worldwide manhunt that began nearly a decade ago on Sept. 11, 2001."

Comment: Fox news tried to foreground the fact that Justice has been done, and that he was killed by the US forces, while Al-Jazeera just declared the fact that Bin Laden was killed

Fox news**:** "Killed in firefight"
Comment: A Firefight means that two groups of people were shooting at each other; hence we can see Van Dijk's famous Ideological square at work in Fox's article even from the beginning. Fox's, echoing Obama, states that a firefight took place, leading the reader to a rather Hollywoodish scene in which Bin Laden's group is fighting the American Special Ops. Fox news doesn't want to give the reader the image of 40 highly trained American soldiers ganging up against 1 grey haired man. Firefight gives a picture about the event, and that's semantic loading. Thus, "mitigate our bad" from Van Dijk's ideological square was achieved by Fox News.

Fox News: Obama says: "Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader. He was a mass murderer of Muslims so his demise should be welcomed by all who believe in peace and human dignity."

Comment: This is a great example of implicature given by Obama meaning that those who do not welcome his demise do not believe in peace and human dignity, and that is a big implicature that enforces the 'emphasize our good' approach in Van Dijk'd ideological square. Interestingly Al-Jazeera and the Guardian did not include the later part of the quote about welcoming his demise in their many quotes throughout their articles .

The Guardian: "Osama bin Laden, the criminal mastermind behind al-Qaida and the world's most sought after terrorist since the attacks of 11 September 2001, has been killed by a US operation"

Al Quds: "Barak Obama announces that a US operation in Pakistan leads to the killing of Osama Bin Laden the leader of Al Qaida".

Comment: The Guardian foregrounds that Bin Laden is the sinister leader of Al Qaida and that he was responsible for brilliantly planning the September 11th attacks. In fact, both the Guardian and Fox News use the word mastermind twice in their text. Al-Quds on the other hand, foregrounds that he was killed by a US operation in Pakistan. The Guardian and Fox talked about how crowds gathered in front of the white house to celebrate, and how they started to sing the

national anthem. Al-Jazeera and AL-Quds did not include this item, caring about the feelings of their audience.

Author's comment: In analyzing the same news item reported in four different newspapers, the Syrian student perhaps subliminally unearths his own beliefs about the media's need to be objective while reporting the manhunt, as well as the need for the audience to empathize with a human being who was rightly or wrongly accused of terrorism. He infers that Al Jazeera and Al Quds being Arab news channels were being mindful of their audience's empathy for Osama bin Laden when they did not report the celebrations that took place outside the White House after his capture.

Conclusion

In all the stories presented, the three dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis is manifested clearly where the first dimension is that of textual analysis, the second dimension examines discourses as conduits of ideology, and finally the third dimension explores social practices as interpretations of hegemonic ideology. The students engaged in discussions that unearthed their individual sense of social justice, thus evoking a curriculum beyond the confines of a set syllabus and a classroom environment. Hence, students were able to empathize with the victims while trying to understand the ideology of the perpetrators at work. These class discussions proved to be a platform to try and understand a situation from different vantage points. The analysis presented highlights the importance of inculcating a Cosmopolitan sense of social justice in students, which necessitates an empathetic understanding of other cultures' social norms for a peaceful coexistence in today's globalized world. After all, moral Cosmopolitanism enjoins people to extend their obligations beyond the confines of their own cultural boundaries and understand others.

About the Author:

Naghmana Z. Ali, PhD from the University of Toronto (Canada), is currently an Assistant Professor at the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE). She has trained ESL teachers in MA TESOL programs, and taught linguistics courses for over 18 years in Nigeria, Pakistan, Canada, and the UAE. Her research interests are curriculum development, language culture and identity, teacher education, women and education, second language education and bilingualism.

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