Exploring Multicultural Picturebooks in a Heritage Language Classroom

Chaehyun Lee

Abstract

This article focuses on using multicultural literature with a class of heritage language learners in the third grade. In this qualitative study, a class of Korean American children's responses to multicultural picturebooks are examined by means of discourse analysis. The context for the study was a Korean heritage language school classroom in the United States. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a guiding lens, this study aims to illuminate the influence of multicultural picturebooks on children's identity formation and the development of values and beliefs about equality, diversity, and inclusion. Eight multicultural picturebooks (three Asian American, two Mexican American, two African American, and one Indigenous Canadian) were introduced. The findings reveal that these picturebooks had six different roles during lessons: fostering positive self-esteem, developing intercultural competence, challenging biases and stereotypes, developing cross-cultural friendship, promoting critical consciousness and perspectives, and facilitating sympathy and empathy. These findings have implications for educators of culturally and linguistically diverse children and would indicate that multicultural picturebooks have affordances as a powerful pedagogical tool. These literary formats provide children with experiences through stories that function as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Sims Bishop, 1990) which enhance their cultural identities and foster cultural diversity.

Keywords*:* multicultural picturebooks; critical race theory; Korean American bilingual students; heritage language school; discourse analysis

Chaehyun Lee (PhD) is an Assistant Professor of Elementary Education and ESL / Bilingual Education at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, United States. Her research interests include bilingualism, biliteracy development, heritage language learning, multiculturalism, and elementary teacher education.

Introduction

Scholars previously estimated that by 2020, 50 per cent of learners in schools in the United States would be members of minority groups (Webb et al., 2000). According to a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report (de Brey et al., 2019), the total enrolment of minority groups in public elementary and secondary schools reached 52 per cent. These were, in 2018, Hispanic, Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Mixed race, Native American for 27%, 15%, 5%, 4%, 1%, respectively, and 48 per cent of school students were White/European American. The percentage of children attending school who are White is projected to continue decreasing, whereas each minority ethnic group is projected to continue increasing. Therefore, since schools are becoming much more culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), educators need to not only learn about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all their learners but also strive to provide curricula that can mirror their diverse cultural and linguistic environments (Banks & Banks, 2006).

As classroom teachers encounter CLD students, several scholars advocate using multicultural literature in the classroom (e.g., Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Cai, 2002; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). Yet, despite the merits of multicultural literature, books about CLD children are seldom available and rarely used in the United States school curriculum (Chaudhri & Teale, 2013; Crisp et al., 2016). Accordingly, US born Asian American children have been often exposed to literature that emphasizes the dominant culture but marginalizes their heritage cultures. Moreover, scholars have highlighted the absence of Asian Americans in children's literature (Loh-Hagen, 2014; Rodríguez & Kim, 2018) as well as in the US history curriculum (An, 2016; Hartlep & Scott, 2016). Due to a lack of quality Asian American children's literature, Asian Americans are therefore far less likely to encounter and be exposed to accurate stories from a broad range of Asian American perspectives.

Considering that Korean American learners in the United States have had insufficient opportunities to learn about cultural diversity including their heritage cultures (Rodríguez, 2018; Yi, 2014), I decided to use multicultural picturebooks with the Korean American learners in my Korean heritage language (HL) class, to enable them to engage in deeper reflections about diverse cultural identities. Researchers (e.g., Banks, 2016; Louie, 2005; Liang et al., 2017) maintain that providing linguistic and ethnic minority children with literature that portrays their heritage cultures before introducing literature about other cultural groups is desirable because 'it

is difficult for students to step into others' positions and to operate cognitively and emotionally with a set of beliefs and values that are not their own' (Louie, 2005, p. 568). In this regard, I encourage learners to explore and identify with their *own* ethnic and heritage culture by introducing multicultural literature in a South Korean context first, and then providing literary works about different cultural groups so that they can find themselves and can be more knowledgeable about their own cultural heritage initially (Picower, 2011a, 2012a).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the roles of multicultural picturebooks when introduced to learners during literature lessons in a HL classroom. The following research question guided my study: What role does multicultural children's literature play in enhancing Korean American learners' cultural and ethnic identities and establishing their values and beliefs about equality, diversity, and inclusion?

Benefits of Using Multicultural Literature

Brinson (2009) maintains how books with culturally specific information and illustrations encourage children of minority ethnic groups to develop positive self-esteem and strong ethnic identities in terms of their cultural heritage. Other researchers argue that encountering multicultural literature powerfully functions to counter inaccurate stereotypes (Evans, 2010; Koss, 2015), to understand social (in)justice (Agarwal-Rangnath, 2013; DeNicolo & Fránquiz, 2006), to increase empathy toward others (Evans, 2010; Sarraj et al., 2015), and to broaden one's perspectives of diversity and cultural pluralism (Crisp et al., 2016; Lehman, 2017). Sims Bishop (1990, 1992) maintains that multicultural children's literature affords experiences with stories that serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors because young readers can see reflections of themselves, learn about the lives and experiences of others, and walk into stories to encounter diverse cultures.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) recognizes that multiple forms of oppression (such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, and immigration status) exist in society as experiences among people of colour (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 2011). Proponents of CRT acknowledge that the concept of race is not a biological or scientific fact, but instead, is a socially constructed phenomenon (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Willis et al., 2008). Museus and Iftikar

(2014) argue that racism exists in a *natural* way in people's lives and is a *permanent fixture* in society (p. 20, italics in the original). CRT scholars believe a regime of White supremacy with its subordination of people of colour, as racism, is deeply rooted in history and permeates society.

Scholars working in higher education have adopted a CRT framework to challenge White privilege, dominant beliefs, and colour blindness and to analyze how race and racism function to oppress people of colour (Poon, 2014; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Educational researchers who have adopted the CRT framework consider literature as a form of social protest and a political movement against racism through a critical race lens (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Rodríguez, 2018). As both CRT and multicultural literature are committed to social justice to eradicate racial inequality and social oppression, I use multicultural literature as a tool to counter dominant hegemonic narratives and approaches prevalent in learners' everyday school experiences. Using CRT as a framework, I therefore aim to apply a critical lens to the analysis of learners' oral responses to multicultural picturebooks, and in turn to illuminate ways they identify racism and other forms of oppression portrayed in storylines about different races, languages, classes, religions, and cultures.

Research Context

This study primarily took place in a Korean Heritage Language school in an urban Texas school district where circa 80,000 Korean Americans reside. Approximately 41 per cent of the town's population identify as non-Latinx White and six per cent as Asian. There were originally no Korean-English bilingual education programmes in the local school districts. Korean American parents/ caregivers in the town aiming to support their children's HL learning therefore funded the Korean HL school. Thus, the school is private and has been established for Korean American students by providing formal instruction in Korean at each grade level. Most of the enrolled students are second-generation Korean Americans, born in the United States after their parents/caregivers had immigrated. The school provides classes for Korean American students from kindergarten to Grade 5, which meet for three hours per week on Saturdays, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The data collection for this article occurred during the fall semester of 2019.

There were six learners enrolled in the third grade and they were all invited to participate in the study. Parental permission was granted with consent letters, and I received student assent with participant letters. All six learners were born in the USA to parents who had immigrated

from South Korea. They received all-English medium instruction at the schools they attended during weekdays, and I was their third-grade teacher of Korean language and culture at the Korean HL school. It was my first year of teaching at this school, but I had previously worked as a Korean HL teacher in a university town in the Midwest for five-and-a-half years. Children customarily study the four language skills in Korean and learn about aspects of Korean culture, and I decided to supplement and enrich this with a focus on multicultural literature, which formed the basis of this study. To avoid potential bias due to my positionality as teacher and as a researcher (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; McNiff, 2013), I established that my primary role as a teacher was to encourage the learners' participation and facilitate their learning. In other words, my goal was to collect data in a natural setting by foregrounding the children's learning over data collection.

Picturebooks Selected for the Study

I chose eight multicultural picturebooks that represent different ethnic groups with diverse cultures and dynamic life experiences. I selected the literature according to the following criteria: (a) culturally specific books (Sims Bishop, 1992) that depict the unique experiences of non-White cultural groups; (b) books that illustrate minority children as main characters and portray the character's feelings/emotions and desires/hopes; (c) the artwork and illustrations in the books are culturally distinct and authentic (Gopalakrishnan, 2010; Short & Fox, 2007); (d) books that are written or illustrated by cultural insiders (Banks & Banks, 2006; Cai, 2002) and the stories are told from insiders' perspectives (Short & Fox, 2007).

Based on the criteria above, I compiled a balanced collection of multicultural picturebooks, including diverse cultural groups with different topics or themes: I selected three Asian or Asian American, two Mexican American, two African American, and one Indigenous Canadian picturebook (see Table 1). It is important to note that Asian or Asian American children's literature is somewhat limited to East Asian groups, particularly Chinese and Japanese (Rodríguez, 2018; Yi, 2014). Hence, the histories and contemporary experiences of other Asian groups (i.e., Southern, Southeast, or Western Asian minority groups) remain marginalized in Asian American children's literature. To provide diverse Asian ethnic cultures rather than grouping all Asians collectively, I included stories from three different Asian ethnic, regional, and religious groups.

Picturebooks	Ethnic Groups	Genres
The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi	Northeast Asian (Korean)	Contemporary fiction
Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle by Reza Jalali, illus. by Anne S. O'Brian	Southwest Asian (Iran)	Contemporary religious fiction
Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Williams and Khadra Mohammed, illus. by Doug Chayka	South Asian (Afghanistan-Pakistan)	Contemporary realistic fiction
Friends from the Other Side by Gloria Anzaldua, illus. by Consuelo Mendez	Mexican American	Contemporary realistic fiction
The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson, illus. by E. B. Lewis	African American	Historical realistic fiction
Separate is Never Equal by Duncan Tonatiuh	Mexican American	Historical nonfiction biography
Freedom Summer by Deborah Wiles, illus. by Jerome Lagarrigue	African American	Historical realistic fiction
I am Not a Number by Jenny Dupuis and Kathy Kacer, illus. by Gillian Newland	Indigenous Canadian	Historical nonfiction biography

Table 1. Multicultural Picturebooks Selection

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

The class participated in picturebook reading for 40-50 minutes, depending on the length of the chosen picturebook. The class then engaged in discussions of the picturebook for another 40-50 minutes. To use multicultural picturebooks as a means of personal and social exploration, I tried to provide thought-provoking questions (e.g., 'Do you think is it fair to treat people differently based on their skin colour and hair texture?' 'How would you feel if someone did not allow you to use your name and speak your language?'). To enable the children to explore social issues, we closely examined multiple forms of oppression in the picturebooks (e.g. structural racism, social segregation) rather than simply asking questions that can be easily found from the text. Hence, through the literature discussions, the children shared their interpretations of the stories as they identified multicultural topics or issues that were raised in the literary format.

Audio-recordings of the children's oral responses took place during the post-reading discussion sessions. These were recorded for 90-100 minutes every two weeks during the fall semester in 2019 (eight times in total) when they participated in multicultural picturebook

readings and discussions, resulting in approximately 760 minutes of recordings. The semi-structured interviews with each third grader took place after school in the classroom at the end of the semester. During the interviews, each child received questions based on their oral responses to the picturebooks from the audio recordings in a retrospective way. In other words, I used a preliminary analysis of the data about the picturebook stories to discuss and further learn about the children's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and/or perspectives towards the characters, plots, particular scenes, and overall storylines. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, multiple informal lesson debriefs, and spontaneous discussions took place in the classroom during lessons.

Discourse analysis was used to examine the data from the audio-recordings (Bloome et al., 2004), which enabled me to identify emerging patterns and themes by transcribing the children's oral responses to the picturebooks. Using CRT as a guiding lens, I focused particularly on responses to and critiques of social / cultural issues and I searched for consistent patterns and themes to identify the potential roles of multicultural picturebooks. As the data analysis progressed, I arrived at six themes and in the findings below, I use the following keys: T = Teacher, S = Student, italics = responses in Korean, underline = stressed word, [] = researcher's observations and descriptions.

Roles of Multicultural Picturebooks

The eight multicultural picturebooks collectively functioned as powerful pedagogical tools in enabling the learners to gain a better understanding of their own cultures and the cultures of others. Overall, six key roles were observed during the children's responses to the picturebooks when reading the texts, analysing the illustrations, and discussing the stories. These are: a) fostering positive self-esteem and identity; b) intercultural awareness and competence; c) challenging biases and stereotypes; d) developing cross-cultural friendship by stimulating imagination; e) promoting critical consciousness and perspectives; and f) facilitating sympathy and empathy.

Fostering positive self-esteem using *The Name Jar*

Multicultural picturebooks that closely mirror the children's own cultures helped them to develop positive self-esteem as Korean Americans as they were able to find themselves and reflect on their own lived experiences from the story. When I read aloud the part in the picturebook *The*

Name Jar (Choi, 2003) when Unhei (the protagonist) and her mother go to the Korean grocery store to buy cabbage to make *kimchi* [a traditional Korean food], the students were interested in sharing their experiences by making connections to themselves.

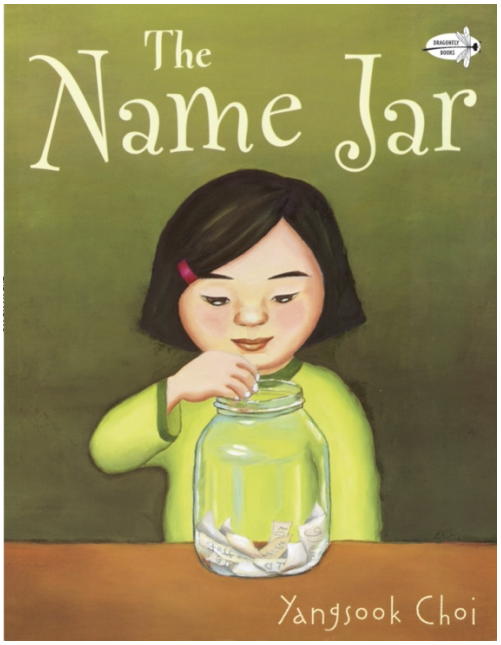


Figure 1. Front Cover of *The Name Jar* (Choi, 2003)

Excerpt 1. Fostering Positive Self-Esteem and Identity

1. T: Unhei's mother from the book said Unhei that 'Just because we've moved to America doesn't mean we stop eating Korean food'. Do you agree with her?
2. S2: Yes, of course. My favorite food is Korean food. Although I live in America, I always choose Korean food instead of American food.
3. S3: Me too! I am Korean American too, but I always prefer to have Korean food.
4. S4: You know what? I didn't miss anything when I had to come back to the US after summer break, but I missed Korean food there a lot.
5. T: Wow… you all are talking about Korean food. Do you think food can represent your culture? Your identity as Korean?
6. S4: Yes, I think so. The food that we eat tells you about a part of my culture.
7. S5: I see myself as more Korean than American sometimes because of the food that I eat and enjoy.

8. S5: Sometimes I am proud of being Korean because eating very spicy food doesn't make me sweat [laughs]. It is a part of an Asian culture thing.

While reading the picturebook, the children seemed to engage with the story by sharing their experiences and making connections as they saw themselves reflected. Particularly, my question in line 1 led the learners to think about their ethnic identities as Korean through the traditional food items (lines 2-4). They agreed with my statement (line 5) that the food can represent one's culture by stating 'a part of my culture' (line 6), 'see myself as Korean because of the food I eat and enjoy' (line 7), and 'a part of Asian culture thing' (line 8). Therefore, familiar topics and concepts (such as food) from this multicultural Korean picturebook helped the children to develop familiarity, safety, and confidence. As S5 mentioned that 'proud of being Korean' (line 8), talking about the learners' cultures fostered positive self-esteem and identity.

Developing intercultural awareness and competence using *Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle*

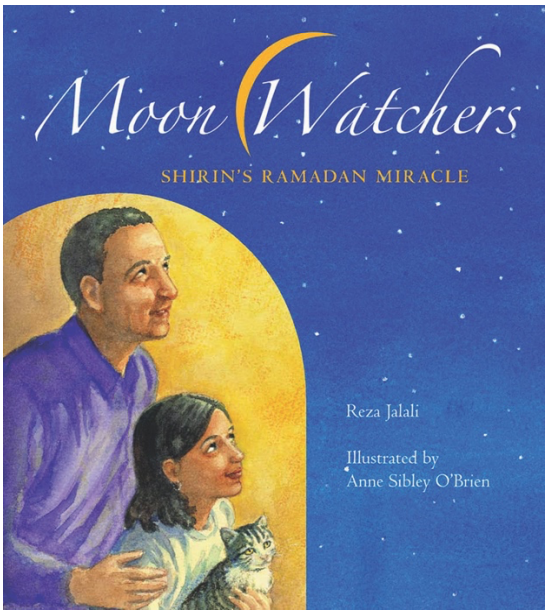


Figure 2. Front Cover of *Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle* (Jalali, 2016)

Multicultural picturebooks also helped the children to become more aware of others' cultures and develop their knowledge and understanding of the diversity that exists within all cultural groups. The class learned about Ramadan from the picturebook *Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan*

Miracle (Jalali, 2016) and explored the Islamic practice of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan by making connections to their own [Korean] cultural practices and ceremonies. Excerpt 2 displays the children's responses to the picturebook:

Excerpt 2. Developing Intercultural Awareness and Competence

1. S2: Wow! Is it real that they can't have any food during Ramadan?
2. T: Yes, it is their religious practice. They believe that Ramadan teaches them to practice self-discipline and self-control by fasting. They also believe that they should fast for poor people who don't have enough food so that the poor can get food to eat….
3. S2: Wow… okay. I think we have a similar thing at home. Whenever we have *Jesa* [Korean traditional memorial ritual to honour their ancestors], my parents told me that I should not eat any food before we finish our *Jesa*. I think it is kind of similar…
4. T: Yes, that's a good point! You are right. *Jesa* is a Korean traditional ceremony held every year to mark the day of someone's passing.
5. T: Yes, Ramadan is a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims. I also want you to think about what other religions celebrate on their holidays.
6. S3: Christmas for Christian.
7. S5: Maybe…Easter for Christian?
8. T: Yes, you two are right! We also have Passover as a Jewish holiday, and Diwali is the Hindu festival. Also, in Korea, we have Buddha's Birthday as a Buddhist festival.
9. S3: Oh! It is like a Christmas for Buddha? [laughs]
10. T: Yes, you are right. So, there are diverse family traditions and different religious practices for holidays, right?
11. S2: But we do not learn much about other religions or holidays in my school. I think we always celebrate Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.
12. S3: Yes, my school doesn't do either. I wish we could celebrate *Chuseok* [Korean Thanksgiving] in our school. [laughs]

To follow-up, I asked the learners (S2 & S3) to provide more information during the interviews. S2 answered that 'we have many kids from Mexico and also some Asian kids, too. So, I think that it would be great if we learn about what they do at home with their families as we do Jesa'.

Similarly, S3 responded that 'I celebrate both Korean and American holidays, but Korean ones are only at home. No one knows what kinds of holidays we [Koreans] are celebrating, so I just wish we could celebrate Korean holidays in my American school'. The two children were alluding to the lack of diverse cultural curricula in their mainstream schools. Thus, this multicultural picturebook not only illuminated a specific cultural and religious practice but also enabled them (S2 & S3 particularly) to critically think about whose voices are often silenced or marginalized. The two learners' critical thoughts guided them to consider the importance of including diverse cultures (e.g., religions and holidays) to develop intercultural awareness and competence.

Challenging biases and stereotypes using *Four Feet, Two Sandals*

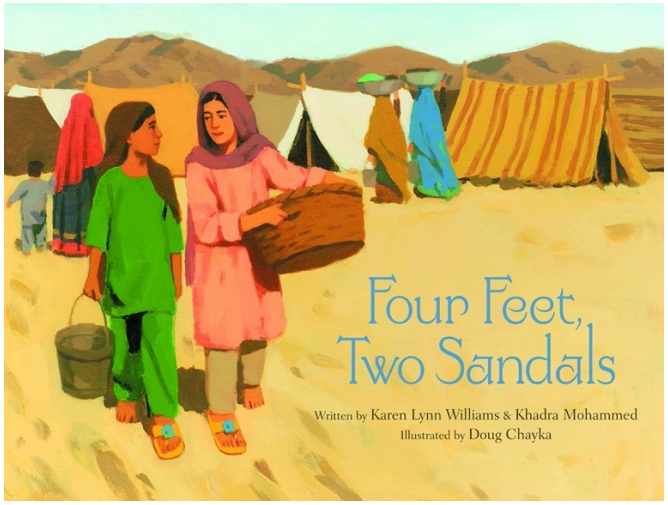


Figure 3. Front Cover of *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams & Mohammed, 2007)

Multicultural picturebooks additionally provided opportunities for the learners to challenge prejudices and stereotypes toward cultural or ethnic groups. The picturebook *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams & Mohammed, 2007) shows the hardships that refugees experience in camps when seeking refuge. Before reading, I used photographs of refugee camps and a short film to show the class what life can be like for refugees. I asked the learners to focus on the illustrations while reading the picturebook, particularly the setting. Two of the learners mentioned that they had learned about refugees from watching movies and their parents. Excerpt 3 displays their prejudices and stereotypes toward refugees and further demonstrates how their responses changed after reading the picturebook.

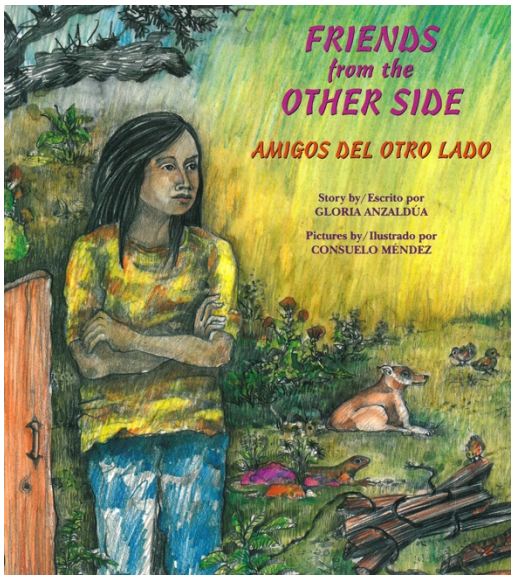
Excerpt 3. Challenging Biases and Stereotypes

1. S2: I knew people's lives in those camps. They flee from their countries due to wars. My parents told me when we were watching a movie about them.
2. S4: I watched a movie or something showing people from there, and my mom told me their stories and also the reason why they live in tents.
3. S4: I thought that the children there were quite dangerous and fearful because they are from countries where there are wars.
4. S2: I was kind of afraid of them because they look unsafe and threatening.
5. S4: But now [after reading the book] I think they are not intimidating at all. The girls in the story were kind to each other.
6. S2: The children there look innocent and harmless to me. They are just unlucky.

When I showed the class the photos and a short film, the two learners (S2 and S4) used their prior knowledge they had learned about refugees (lines 1 & 2). Before reading the picturebook, the responses in lines 3-4 include the words 'dangerous', 'fearful', 'unsafe', and 'threatening' to describe people in refugee camps, which indicates an over-generalized belief and harmful stereotypes about refugees. Yet, their subsequent statements after reading the picturebook indicate changes in their word choices for describing refugees to: 'not intimidating', 'kind to each other', 'innocent', and 'harmless' (lines 5 & 6). It appears that the picturebook replaced fear with curiosity and fostered a broader perspective toward different life experiences, needs, and hopes. The learners' responses imply that the picturebook also increased their appreciation of other ways of life and most importantly, it challenged the biases and stereotypes that they (S2 & S4) held towards refugees.

Developing cross-cultural friendship using *Friends from the Other Side* and *The Other Side*

Multicultural picturebooks also promoted the learners' development of cross-cultural friendships in their imaginations as they increased mutual understanding through interaction across ethnic backgrounds. While reading the picturebook *Friends from the Other Side* (Anzaldua, 1997), the class referred to the previous picturebook *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) they had read because of the similar storylines of cross-cultural and interracial friendships. The children's discussion in Excerpt 4 shows how they made connections to another text, the wider world, and themselves to develop potential cross-cultural friendships using their imaginations.



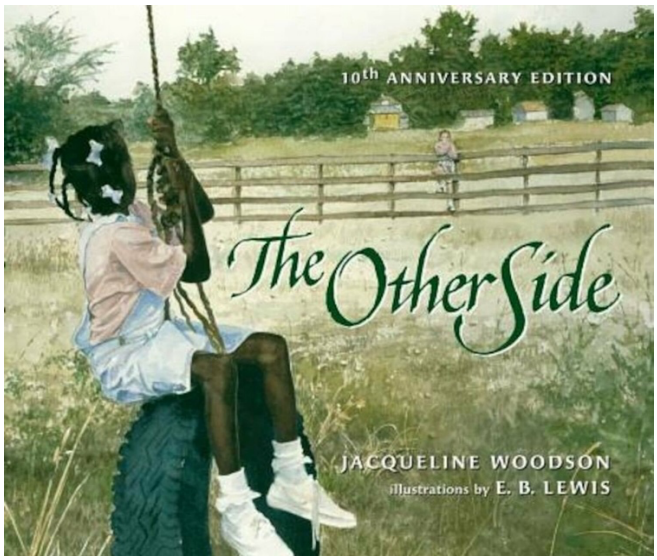


Figure 4. Front Covers of *Friends from the Other Side* (Anzaldua, 1997) and *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001)

Excerpt 4. Developing Cross-Cultural Friendships by Stimulating Imagination

1. S3: This is similar to the story that we had read last time. The White and Black girls became friends with each other.
2. S5: Oh, right. They live in different places even in the same town because the fence divided them into two. The children in this book also live in different countries.
3. T: Yes, you are right. There is a border between Mexico and Texas so they are living in different countries, but people can cross the border to work or get a job, as Joaquin did in the story.
4. S2: It is the same as how we are doing in Korea…? We have a border between North and South Korea, but people there can't cross the border.
5. T: That is a good point! Korea is divided into two regions after Korean War. We call it *38 seon* [the demilitarized zone]. You might have heard it. But normal people like us cannot cross the zone.
6. S1: I really want to go to North Korea someday so that I can make friends like they did in the book. It would be cool!
7. S4: My mom told me that kids in North Korea don't have much freedom nor enough money to buy something they want. I want to help them by sharing something I have if I can become friends with them.

8. S5: I will share mine, too. And I can teach them English!

As shown in the excerpt, two learners (S3 and S5) made text-to-text connections by applying what they had learned from the previous picturebook (lines 1 & 2). Then, S2 made text-to-world connections as he was relating the scene in the text to his country of origin (Korea), which also has a border between the North and South (line 4). S2's statement led the other learners (S1, S4, & S5) to make text-to-self connections by using their imaginations to make hypothetical friends from North Korea (lines 6-8), and the learners stated how they would help children in North Korea. As the two picturebooks both portray main characters of different ethnic backgrounds having developed friendships over time, these stories appeared to promote the belief among the learners that people can build strong bonds despite cultural differences.

Promoting critical consciousness using *Freedom Summer* and *Separate is Never Equal*

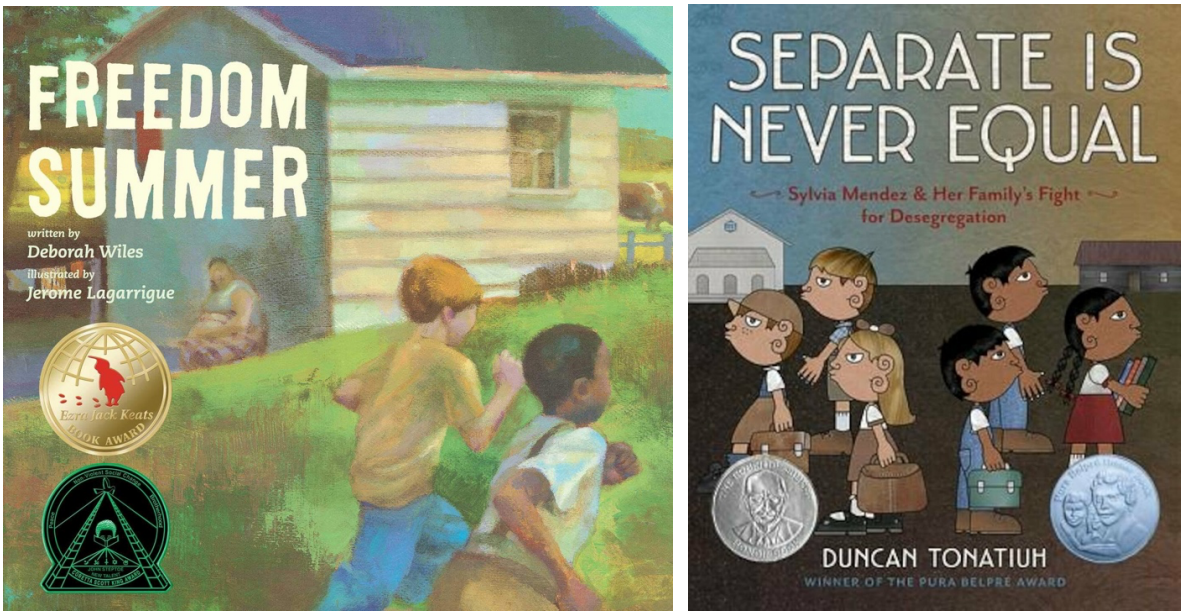


Figure 5. Front Covers of *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2005) and *Separate is Never Equal* (Tonatiuh, 2014)

Multicultural picturebooks further developed the learners' critical consciousness and broader perspectives by introducing themes of inequality and injustice. *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2005) and *Separate is Never Equal* (Tonatiuh, 2014) address racism, discrimination, and segregation, and when encountering the scenes of racial inequality while reading, the children repeatedly stated that 'it is unfair'. Thus, I raised this issue by asking whether it is fair to treat people

differently based on their skin colour or ethnic background. Excerpt 5 displays the children's profound conversation based on my question, which demonstrates their understanding of the widespread existence of inequality and injustice.

Excerpt 5. Promoting Critical Consciousness and Perspectives

1. T: Do you think it is fair to treat people differently based on their skin color or race?
2. S1: No! It is not fair to treat people differently.
3. S5: No, it is absolutely bad. But sometimes people do because they are mean, or they just think that they are better than others.
4. T: Why do you think people sometimes think they are better or superior to others?
5. S2: We learned about the Civil War and slavery. White people made Blacks slavery at that time. That's why White people still think that they are better than Black um…and Mexican and Asian.
6. S4: But I think that is a very bad idea to think that way. People should not be treated differently because we are all equal.
7. S5: I agree too! Actually, some Black people are smarter than White people although Whites believe that they are more intelligent than Blacks.
8. S1: Yes, my friend Colbie. She is Black, but she is very smart, smarter than anyone else in my class. But the beginning of the semester, people kind of teased her because she has kinky hair.
9. T: Oh… I am sorry to hear that. How was your feeling as a friend of her?
10. S1: I felt bad because I am close to her. But my classmates treat her okay now. Once when I was invited to my other friend's birthday party, Colbie was not invited, but I went there with her. I think my other friends treat her better since then.
11. S6: Me, too. I had a Black friend last year in my class. My other White friends didn't seem to like him. But I always invited him to join our soccer games because he was really good at soccer.

As shown from the discussions, these multicultural picturebooks enabled the children to view and analyse inequality, injustice, and discrimination through a critical lens. During their discussions, S1 and S5 claimed that treating people differently based on their skin colour or race is 'bad' and 'not fair' (lines 2 & 3). In his response, S2 used his prior knowledge about the American Civil

War and slavery by indicating how White hegemony excludes other racial and ethnic groups (line 5). Both S4 and S5 argued that people should be treated equally by disagreeing with the idea of White supremacy (lines 6 & 7). Agreeing with others' arguments, two learners (S1 & S6) shared how their classmates treated their African American friends in their regular, day schools (lines 8 & 11). Then, they shared what they have done to help friends in their peer group (lines 10 & 11, respectively). Engaging in literature discussions after reading these two picturebooks depicting racism and discrimination helped two learners (S1 & S6) realize that they had empowered others to become actively involved in social change.

Facilitating sympathy and empathy using *I am Not a Number*

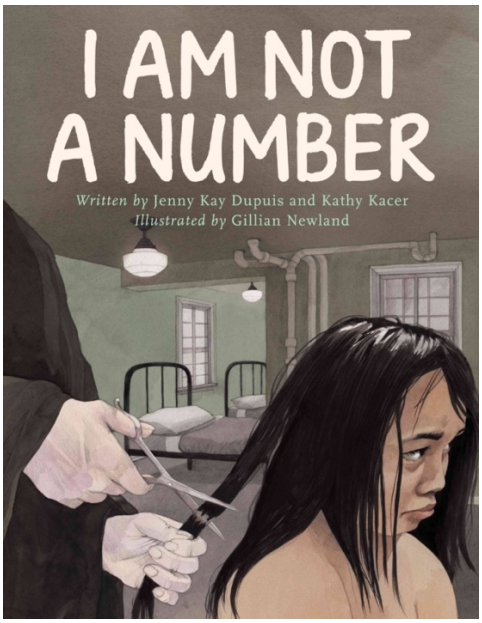


Figure 6. Front Cover of *I am Not a Number* (Dupuis &Kacer, 2019)

Multicultural picturebooks also fostered the children's abilities to demonstrate sympathy and empathy towards other cultural groups. The Indigenous Canadian multicultural picturebook *I am Not a Number* (Dupuis & Kacer, 2019) enabled learners to develop understanding and empathy for people who are different from themselves. While reading, the children reacted and responded to the story with intense emotions. Hence, I selected three scenes with direct quotations so that the learners could focus more deeply. Excerpt 6 illustrates their responses to the three chosen scenes when the protagonist is treated badly by the nun at the residential school.

Excerpt 6. Facilitating Sympathy and Empathy

1. T: Why don't we think about the three scenes from the story? First of all, I want to point out the part when the nun at the residential school told Irene [the protagonist] that 'let's get rid of that hair'.
2. S4: That is so bad to do that. People can't cut others' hair if they don't want to. As she said, it was more than just a haircut. I was so sadwhen I read it.
3. S3: Me, too. I was sad, too. She had long pretty hair, but they just cut her hair.
4. S1: I love having long hair. That's why I have long hair, and I can grow and grow my hair if I want, but she couldn't… Look, she looks so sad and unhappy in the picture.
5. T: Second, the students at school were not allowed to use their native language and were pushed to use English only by saying 'That's the evil's language!' How would you feel if someone doesn't allow you to use your language?
6. S2: No way! I use my language all the time to talk to my family and friends, but she was not allowed to use her language to talk to her friends.
7. S1: I am sorry for her and the other children at school there. I would cry all day if I were not allowed to use my language and cannot see my parents.
8. S5: If I were in her position, I would be mad and upset. That was a very bad treat.
9. T: Lastly, the students' names were replaced by numbers. The nun said 'We don't use names here. All students areknown by numbers. Youare 759!'
10. S4: I don't like it. That is too harsh. That's just too much!! It seems like they treated the children as things not as human.
11. S6: I am so sorry for her because … she has a pretty name, but she had to say yes when they call the number 759.
12. S5: I was really upset when I read the part when the nun said, 'If you throw up the food, you will have to eat the vomit'. That is so harsh and extreme and just too much to do to the students at school.
13. S1: True. I can feel the pain that she feels.

All six learners actively engaged in the literature discussion by recognizing and identifying the protagonist's emotions and feelings, and expressing sympathy in their responses. They also responded empathetically, affirming, 'If I were in her position, I would be mad and upset' (line 8)

and 'I can feel the pain that she feels' (line 13). Reading the story from the indigenous girl's perspective enhanced the learners' awareness of the indigenous children's emotions and feelings. Two learners (S1 & S2) further made personal connections by comparing their daily lives to Irene's (the protagonist) experiences at the residential school by stating 'I can grow my hair if I want, but she couldn't…' (line 4) and 'I use my language all the time, but she was not allowed to use…' (line 6). Making connections to their own lives helped them to empathize with the protagonist, which supported their understanding of others' feelings and emotions, and in turn, positively facilitated their sympathy and empathy towards people from other cultures.

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

The study examined the roles of multicultural picturebooks in exploring Korean American children's cultural and racial identities and establishing their values and beliefs about equality, diversity, and inclusion in the Korean HL classroom. As a classroom teacher, I used eight different multicultural picturebooks and used the multicultural Korean picturebook first so that the children could see themselves and be knowledgeable about their cultures before learning about other cultural groups through literature.

The findings illuminated how the multicultural picturebooks played six different roles when introduced during literature discussions, with open-ended and thought-provoking questions related to multicultural topics or issues raised in the picturebooks. As such, these pedagogical approaches did not exist in the children's regular school experiences due to the major absence of multicultural literature in the United States school curriculum (Crisp et al., 2016). CRT became valuable during the literature discussions in the HL classroom as the learners shared their interpretations of these narratives by identifying dynamic social issues.

Engaging in the Korean picturebook *The Name Jar*, that portrays the children's own cultures and life experiences, provided the Korean American learners with the positive affirmation to build strong ethnic/cultural identities and enhance their self-esteem. As Brinson (2009) showed in her study, African American picturebooks promote African American children's positive self-esteem. In this study, the picturebook that portrays Korean culture supported the learners to take pride in their own cultural heritage. This suggests that HL teachers could incorporate their learners' lives and cultures into the curriculum so that children can

consider themselves valued members of the community, society, and country, which closely aligns with the pursuit of social justice education.

Multicultural picturebooks that portray other Asian children in Western and Southern Asia (*Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle*, *Four Feet, Two Sandals,* respectively) increased the children's intercultural awareness and competence about other Asian groups they were not familiar with. This is like Evan's (2010) findings as the (ethnically diverse) fourth-grade students in her study showed increased understanding of and gained respect for people of different cultures. Learning about people's cultures and lives in other parts of Asia also led the learners to critically consider the voices of marginalized groups as well as to challenge stereotypes that exist towards other cultural groups.

The two multicultural picturebooks that depict similar storylines of interracial friendship from African American (*The Other Side*) and Mexican American (*Friends from the Other Side*) ethnic groups helped the children to build imaginary cross-cultural friendships. Steiner et al. (2008) explain that multicultural literature helps readers not to see different ethnic backgrounds as a barrier but as a natural identity. The two books provided the children with awareness that having different racial and cultural identities, and life experiences are not an obstacle for friendship, but rather can contribute to the formation of diverse friendships. The other two multicultural picturebooks that address issues of racism, discrimination, and segregation (*Separate is Never Equal* and *Freedom Summer*) promoted the learners' critical consciousness and perspectives towards society. These books helped the children recognize White privilege and the widespread existence of inequality and injustice (Agarwal-Rangnath, 2013; DeNicolo & Fránquiz, 2006).

The Indigenous Canadian multicultural picturebook helped the children to show sympathy and empathy for characters who are different from themselves. They made personal connections with the female protagonist and through this, they were able to understand her emotions and feelings, and develop greater empathy for her and other indigenous children in the story. These findings corroborate other studies (Evans, 2010; Sarraj et al., 2015) that demonstrate fourth- and fifth-grade students' increased empathy toward other ethnic groups (i.e., Native American, Japanese American, African American) through the multicultural stories they encountered. The third graders in this study further demonstrated that they recognize and appreciate indigenous people's cultural values, beliefs, and identities.

Although the class learned about other cultural holidays after reading the picturebook about Ramadan, it is important to note that teaching about others' cultures by introducing holidays and festivals can result in 'tourist-multiculturalism' (Derman-Sparks, 1993, p. 6), which refers to approaches that merely visit surface levels of cultures. According to Banks (1998), this 'Contributions Approach' is the lowest level of integrating multicultural content into the curriculum and while it can be frequently or easily adopted in classrooms, the traditional ethnocentric curriculum remains unchanged (Salas et al., 2002). Thus, I suggest that while this can be a starting point for curriculum change, it is insufficient to enable children to understand cultural aspects and the complexity of contemporary society, including the multifaceted concepts of cultures which must be explored at a deeper level. Indeed, the findings show that the class discussions after reading the picturebooks that portray racial issues helped the children to better understand problems and complexity in society, as their responses to those stories showed critical awareness of injustice and inequality. The findings also suggest that providing time and space to delve into critical content and social justice issues in the classroom through deep reading and discussions enables learners to better understand equality, diversity, and inclusion and potentially then to take socially just actions.

The findings additionally have implications for educators of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and show that multicultural picturebooks can be a powerful pedagogical tool to provide experiences with stories that serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Sims Bishop, 1990). Teachers of CLD students need to reposition themselves as facilitators and bring a critical stance to creating engaged classrooms by implementing social justice-oriented practices (e.g. class materials that comprise diverse cultural backgrounds and life experiences, classroom discussions that help learners to critically engage with real-world problems and social issues that affect them) so that they can work together toward equity (Picower, 2015). As shown from the findings, a classroom that embraces CRT can support children in enhancing their multicultural perspectives and expanding their worldviews by developing understandings of different social issues from a wide range of cultures and experiences (Evans, 2010; Lehman, 2017). As Paulo Freire (1985) argues that learners need to read 'the word and the world' (p. 20), multicultural picturebooks can be an effective medium for children to engage in a dialogue with texts and society.

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