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Review

War saved in verse: Politics in Ezra Pound's *Canto XVI* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Bouzzit M'bark

English Department, Ibn Zohr University. Morocco.

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Modernist poetry is rarely examined in the light of the very social and political agitations which accompanied its production. Some theorists claim that modernist poetry is apolitical; neglecting the fact that the poet can never exist in vacuum. Unquestionably, the poet is the product of his immediate conditions of existence. No matter how he conceals his social reality, his words reveal it all. This paper looks at two prominent poets, namely Ezra Pound and T.S Eliot to find out where the two allude to World War One in their poetical productions. This paper is an attempt to understand these hidden mysterious allusions (names of soldiers, politicians, and places) which disturb the indecipherable stream of consciousness prevalent in the two poems. This paper brings to life dead corpses; it brings back the memory of those who passed away fighting on the fronts. It implicitly says that war still needs close examination as it is still horrendously practiced by the so-called the modern man. The paper also looks at the psychological torments which the two poets experienced and which led to the production of a very unique work of art. It implicitly says that the ideology behind war is fallacious and it still needs to be closely examined so as to avoid any future clashes.

Key words: Modernism, poetry, politics society, war.

INTRODUCTION

Unquestionably, Ezra Pound and T.S Eliot are two of the most prominent poets of the twentieth century. These two poets revolutionized the principles of Anglo-American poetry, suggesting that conventional poetic patterns and themes can no more encapsulate the complexities of the modern life of the twentieth century. They did not only revolutionize the themes, but they also revolutionized the form by adopting a free verse pattern. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Pound's *The Cantos* are two of the most influential poems in the history of English poetry.

Modernist poetry is rarely examined from a political point of view because many theorists claim that modernist

poetry is apolitical. *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* can be both considered as war poems. Indeed, this is the very claim which this paper shall prove true. This choice of studying politics in *The Cantos* and *The Waste Land* is made because of one immediate impulse; the poetry of both Ezra Pound and T. S Eliot is rarely approached from political point of view. This work shows how these two epics are really representations of the politics of the period. Taking into consideration "the importance of local political and social context for the understanding of literary text." (Wayne, 1990), the allusions to politics in "the Cantos XVI" by Pound and the "What the Thunder

E-mail: Bouzzit.mbark@gmail.com

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Said" by T. S Eliot are studied. In the first part of my paper, there is a short account of the major political changes which took place in Europe in the period between 1914 and 1920, which is the same period during which *The Cantos* and *The Waste Land* were written. In the second part, I shall examine exclusively the allusions to politics in both poems as a way to discover whether Pound and Eliot were influenced by the political upheavals of the period or not. As said earlier, for a better politically engaged understanding of modernist poetry, one needs to understand the major upheavals of the period during which this kind of poetry was produced. Unquestionably, poetry is the production of a poet who is the outcome of a set of interactions that take place within a broader social and political context. Thus, any poet, no matter how his words try to conceal or obliterate reality, somehow there is always a link between his words and his world. A poem then is a representation of reality simply because it is assumed that "no critical poet ever existed in a vacuum, but instead, emerged from a broader intellectual, cultural and social history" (Beasley, 2007). Therefore, what society, religion and politics provide the poet with is what he reproduces through his poetry.

Thus, one crucial step towards understanding Modernist poetry is to familiarize oneself with the biography and the historical background of its writers. To start with, Ezra Pound was born in Hailey in 1895. He wrote on literature, culture and economics. He was also a translator and music composer. Starting from 1945, Pound became a supporter of Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy. For this reason, he was arrested for treason in 1945, but found medically unfit to stand trial and thus committed to St Elizabeth's hospital for the criminally insane in Washington DC where he stayed until 1958. Pound died in 1972. In turn, T. S Eliot was born in 1898 in Hailey, Idaho. Eliot entered Harvard University in 1916, and graduated with a BA and MA in English literature in 1920. It was during this period that Eliot read about the French symbolists such as Baudelaire who shaped Eliot's conceptions of the form and content of poetry. Eliot died in London in 1965.

From this brief biography, it can be easily understood that the period during which Eliot and Pound lived coincided with turmoil and agitation. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was a period of great changes. In this regard, Butler writes:

The loss of belief in religion, the rise of dependence on science and technology, the expansion of markets and the commodification brought about by capitalism, the growth of mass culture and its influence, the invasion of bureaucracy into private life, and changing beliefs about relationships between the sexes (Butler, 2007).

By the advent of the twentieth century, the advances in science and technology and the expansion of markets

concurred with the imperialist ambitions of European countries which looked for overseas colonies. Along with the rise of this imperialist drive, European countries suffered from internal problems which were basically political and thus led to the outbreak of the First World War. This war was a result not only of these internal political problems, but it was also a result of the alliances that European countries started to form. Europe was divided into two opposing alliances; the central powers which included Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, and the Triple Entente which included Britain, France, and Russia. Each of these two alliances tried permanently to make a balance of power. Consequently, both alliances were heavily armed.

The direct cause of the war was the Austro-Hungarian conflict. Since Austria was made of different minorities and ethnic groups which included Austrians, Hungarians, Germans, Czechs, Serbs and many others, each of these desired to gain its independence. As a result of this unrest, Serbs were the first to rebel. Gavrilo Princip, who was a Serb nationalist, assassinated Franz Ferdinand, who was the heir-presumptive of the Austro-Hungarian throne. Immediately after this incident, a local war started between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. This war started local but ended global. Since the alliances were already formed, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand led to the outbreak of the war. The alliances started fighting at different fronts. The two warring alliances used damaging weapons which included tanks used by the British for the first time, and poisonous gas used by Germans. Many new damaging technologies were used so as to bring as much damage as possible for the enemy.

The war was brought to an end after the defeat of Russia (which was already having an internal revolution led by Trotsky and Lenin in 1917) by Germany in 1918. Unfortunately, war left extremely dire consequences. Because of war, Europe lost more than 186 billion dollars. More than that, less than 20 million troops were killed, and less than 3 million civilians were assassinated too. Along with these, numerous cities were completely destroyed by the ravaging war.

War was the century's shock, and the poets were no exception. Europeans' perception of life and their beliefs changed immensely, opening the door to mingled feelings of astonishment and shock. Poets were in the midst of the conflict and thus their poetry portrayed the events in ways which show unconscious pain. A new pattern emerged and with it emerged undefined representations of the world. Meaning starts to fade and only allusions are used to decode the poems.

It is worth knowing that most of Pound's *Cantos XVI* was written between 1915 and 1962. Going through the whole *Cantos XVI*, it is discovered that this epic does not only allude to politics, but at times, it alludes to historical figures like Confucius, and at others it alludes to geographical locations. *Cantos* can even be considered as a religious poem due to the range of religious allusions

that it contains.

1. *Canto XVI*

2. *And before hell mouth; dry plain*
3. *and two mountains;*
4. *On the one mountain, a running form,*
5. *and another*
6. *In the turn of the hill; in hard steel*
7. *The road like a slow screw's thread,*
8. *The angle almost imperceptible,*
9. *so that the circuit seemed hardly to rise;*
10. *And the running form, naked, **Blake,***
11. *Shouting, whirling his arms, the swift limbs,*
12. *Howling against the evil,*
13. *his eyes rolling,*
14. *Whirling like flaming cart-wheels,*
15. *and his head held backward to gaze on the evil*
16. *As he ran from it,*
17. *to be hid by the steel mountain,*
18. *And when he showed again from the north side;*
19. *his eyes blazing toward hell mouth,*
20. *His neck forward,*
21. *and like him **Peire Cardinal.***
22. *And in the west mountain, **Il Fiorentino,***
23. *Seeing hell in his mirror,*
24. *and lo Sordels*
25. *Looking on it in his shield;*
26. *And Augustine, gazing toward the invisible.*

27. *And past them, the criminal*
28. *lying in the blue lakes of acid,*
29. *The road between the two hills, upward*
30. *slowly,*
31. *The flames patterned in lacquer, crimenestactio,*
32. *The limbo of chopped ice and saw-dust,*
33. *And I bathed myself with acid to free myself*
34. *of the hell ticks,*
35. *Scales, fallen louse eggs.*
36. *PaluxLaerna,*
37. *the lake of bodies, aqua morta,*
38. *of limbs fluid, and mingled, like fish heaped in a bin,*
39. *and here an arm upward, clutching a fragment of marble,*
40. *And the embryos, in flux,*
41. *new inflow, submerging,*
42. *Here an arm upward, trout, submerged by the eels;*
43. *and from the bank, the stiff herbage*
44. *the dry nobbled path, saw many known, and unknown,*
45. *for an instant;*
46. *submerging,*
47. *The face gone, generation.*

48. *Then light, air, under saplings,*
49. *the blue banded lake under æther,*
50. *an oasis, the stones, the calm field,*
51. *the grass quiet,*

52. *and passing the tree of the bough*
53. *The grey stone posts,*
54. *and the stair of gray stone,*
55. *the passage clean-squared in granite:*
56. *descending,*
57. *and I through this, and into the earth,*
58. *patet terra,*
59. *entered the quiet air*
60. *the new sky,*
61. *the light as after a sun-set,*
62. *and by their fountains, the heroes,*
63. **Sigismundo,** *and MalatestaNovello,*
64. *and founders, gazing at the mounts of their cities.*

65. *The plain, distance, and in fount-pools*
66. *the nymphs of that water*
67. *rising, spreading their garlands,*
68. *weaving their water reeds with the boughs,*
69. *In the quiet,*
70. *and now one man rose from his fountain*
71. *and went off into the plain.*

72. *Prone in that grass, in sleep;*
73. **et j'entendis des voix:...**
74. *wall . . . **Strasbourg***
75. **Galliffet** *led that triple charge. . . Prussians*
76. *and he said [Plarr's narration]*
77. *it was for the honour of the army.*
78. *And they called him a swashbuckler.*
79. *I didn't know what it was*
80. *But I thought: This is pretty bloody damn fine.*
81. *And my old nurse, he was a man nurse, and*
82. *He killed a Prussian and he lay in the street*
83. *there in front of our house for three days*
84. *And he stank.*
85. **Brother Percy,**
86. *And our Brother Percy...*
87. *old Admiral*
88. *He was a midy in those days,*
89. *And they came into Ragusa*
90. *. place those men went for the **Silk War.***
91. *And they saw a procession coming down through*
92. *A cut in the hills, carrying something*
93. *The six chaps in front carrying a long thing*
94. *on their shoulders,*
95. *And they thought it was a funeral,*
96. *but the thing was wrapped up in scarlet,*
97. *And he put off in the cutter,*
98. *he was a midy in those days,*
99. *To see what the natives were doing,*
100. *And they got up to the six fellows in livery,*
101. *And they looked at it, and I can still hear the old admiral,*
102. *"Was it? it was*
103. *Lord Byron*
104. *Dead drunk, with the face of an A y n.*
105. *He pulled it out long, like that:*

106. the face of an a y n gel.”
107. And because that son of a bitch,
108. **Franz Josef of Austria.**
109. And because that son of a bitch Napoléon Barbiche...
110. They put **Aldington** on Hill 70, in a trench
111. dug through corpses
112. With a lot of kids of sixteen,
113. Howling and crying for their mamas,
114. And he sent a chit back to his major:
115. I can hold out for ten minutes
116. With my sergeant and a machine-gun.
117. And they rebuked him for levity.
118. And Henri Gaudier went to it,
119. and they killed him,
120. And killed a good deal of sculpture,
121. And ole **T.E.H.** he went to it,
122. With a lot of books from the library,
123. London Library, and a shell buried 'em in a dug-out,
124. And the Library expressed its annoyance.
125. And a bullet hit him on the elbow
126. ...gone through the fellow in front of him,
127. And he read Kant in the Hospital, in Wimbledon,
128. in the original,
129. And the hospital staff didn't like it.
130. And Wyndham Lewis went to it,
131. With a heavy bit of artillery,
132. and the airmen came by with a **mitrailleuse**,
133. And cleaned out most of his company,
134. and a shell lit on his tin hut,
135. While he was out in the privy,
136. and he was all there was left of that outfit.
137. Windeler went to it,
138. and he was out in the *Ægæan*,
139. And down in the hold of his ship
140. pumping gas into a sausage,
141. And the boatswain looked over the rail,
142. down into amidships, and he said:
143. Gees! look a' theKept'n,
144. The Kept'n's a-gettin' 'er up.
145. And Ole Captain Baker went to it,
146. with his legs full of rheumatics,
147. So much so he couldn't run,
148. so he was six months in hospital,
149. Observing the mentality of the patients.
150. And Fletcher was 19 when he went to it,
151. And his major went mad in the control pit,
152. about midnight, and started throwing the 'phone about
153. And he had to keep him quiet
154. till about six in the morning,
155. And direct that bunch of artillery.
156. And Ernie Hemingway went to it,
157. too much in a hurry,
158. And they buried him for four days.
159. Et ma foi, vous savez,
160. tous les nerveux. Non,
161. Y a une limite; les bêtes, les bêtes ne sont
162. Pas faites pour ça, c'est peu de chose un cheval.
163. Les hommes de 34 ans à quatre pattes
164. qui criaient "maman." Mais les costauds,
165. La fin, là à Verdun, n'y avait que ces gros bonshommes
166. Et y voyaient extrêmement clair.
167. Qu'est-ce que ça vaut, les généraux, le lieutenant,
168. on les pèse à un centigramme,
169. n'y a rien que du bois,
170. Notr' capitaine, tout, tout ce qu'il y a de plus renfermé
171. de vieux polytechnicien, mais solide,
172. La tête solide. Là, vous savez,
173. Tout, tout fonctionne, et les voleurs, tous les vices,
174. Mais les rapaces,
175. y avait trois dans notre compagnie, tous tués.
176. Y sortaient fouiller un cadavre, pour rien,
177. y n'serainet sortis pour rien que ça.
178. Et les boches, tout ce que vous voulez,
179. militarisme, et cætera, et cætera.
180. Tout ça, mais, MAIS,
181. l'français, i s'bat quand y a mangé.
182. Mais ces pauvres types
183. A la fin y s'attaquaient pour manger,
184. Sans orders, les bêtes sauvages, on y fait
185. Prisonniers; ceux qui parlaient français disaient:
186. "Pooquah? Ma foi on attaquait pour manger."
187. C'est le corr-ggras, le corps gras,
188. leurs trains marchaient trois kilomètres à l'heure,
189. Et ça criait, ça grinçait, on l'entendait à cinq kilomètres.
190. (Ça qui finit la guerre.)
191. Liste officielle des morts 5,000,000.
192. I vous dit, bè, voui, tout sentait le pétrole.
193. Mais, Non! je l'ai engueulé.
194. Je lui ai dit: T'es un con! T'a raté la guerre.
195. voui! tous les homes de goût, y conviens,
196. Tout ça en arrière.
197. Mais un mec comme toi!
198. C't homme, un type comme ça!
199. Ce qu'il aurait pu encaisser!
200. Il était dans une fabrique.
201. What, buryingsquad, terrassiers, avec leur tête
202. en arrière, qui regardaient comme ça,
203. On risquait la vie pour un coup de pelle,
204. Faut que ça soit bein carré, exact...
205. Deyvus a bolchevikidere, und deydease him:
206. Looka vat youah**Trotzsk** is done, e iss

207. *madehdehzhamefullbeace!!*
 208. *"He issmadeh de zhamefullbeace, iss he?"*
 209. *"He is madeh de zhamevullbeace?"*
 210. *"A Brest-Litovsk, yess?Aintyuh herd?"*
 211. *"He vinneh de vore."*
 212. *"De droobsiss released vrom de eastern vront, yess?"*
 213. *"Unvenndeygetts to dehvesternvront, iss it*
 214. *"How many gettsdere?"*
 215. *"And dose doatgettsdereiss so full off revolutions*
 216. *"Venn dehvrench is come dhru, yess,*
 217. *"Deysay, "Vot?" Un de posch say:*
 218. *"Aintyeh heard? Say, ve got a rheffolution."*
219. *That's the trick with a crowd,*
 220. *Get 'em into the street and get 'em moving.*
 221. *And all the time, there were people going*
 222. *Down there, over the river.*
223. *There was a man there talking,*
 224. *To a thousand, just a short speech, and*
 225. *Then move 'em on. And he said:*
 226. *Yes, these people, they are all right, they*
 227. *Can do everything, everything except act;*
 228. *And go an' hear 'em but when they are through*
 229. *Come to the bolsheviki...*
230. *And when it broke, there was the crowd there,*
 231. *And the cossacks, just as always before,*
 232. *But one thing, the cossacks said:*
 233. *"Pojalouista."*
 234. *And that got round in the crowd,*
 235. *And then a lieutenant of infantry*
 236. *Ordered 'em to fire into the crowd,*
 237. *in the square at the end of the Nevsky,*
 238. *In front of the Moscow station,*
 239. *And they wouldn't,*
 240. *And he pulled his sword on a student for laughing,*
 241. *And killed him,*
 242. *And a cossack rode out of his squad*
 243. *On the other side of the square*
 244. *And cut down the lieutenant of infantry*
 245. *And there was the revolution...*
 246. *as soon as they named it.*
247. *And you can't make 'em,*
 248. *Nobody knew it was coming. They were all ready,*
the old gang,
 249. *Guns on the top of the post-office and the palace,*
 250. *But none of the leaders knew it was coming.*
251. *And there were some killed at the barracks,*
 252. *But that was between the troops.*
253. *So we used to hear it at the opera*
 254. *That they wouldn't be under Haig;*
 255. *and that the advance was beginning;*

256. *That it was going to begin in a week.*

The CantosXV describe Dante¹ and Virgil's² journey from hell to paradise. In this part, Dante is approached by souls which claim that Dante belongs to their country. Hell burns their features, which makes them unrecognizable. These souls reveal their names to Dante, who, in turn, calls back their names from his time in Florence and expresses great pity for them. The souls ask Dante if their city still keep its arrogance and glory. Dante disappoints the souls by telling them that their city is characterized by evil. Before leaving, Virgil, who is Dante's guide in this journey, makes an unusual request. He asks for the cord that Dante wears as a belt, and then throws one end of it into a ravine filled with dark water. Dante watches disbelievingly as a horrifying creature rises up before them.

Seemingly, the aforementioned account is maybe what *Cantos XVI* is about, yet the range of allusions the speaker uses proves that it is more than just a journey from hell to paradise. In "et j'entendis des voix" (line 75), *The Cantos XVI* pictures the political complexities of modern life. Obviously, it is at this particular stanza in *The Cantos XV* that the speaker alludes to the Franco-Russian war, Silk War, First World War and the Russian revolution. In the "the wall...Strasburg" (line 76), the speaker alludes to city of Strasburg where the Silk War of XV Century took place. The speaker does not only allude to places, but to the political figures who took part in the Silk War. One concrete example is "Gallifet (who) led the triple charg" (line 77). The speaker states, Gallifet led the French army with honor against Germany in Battle of Sedan (Franco-Prussian War (1870).

Furthermore, what shows that this part of the *The Cantos XV* contains allusions to politics is the explicit reference to the Silk War especially in ".....place those men went for the silk war" (line 92), whereby the speaker alludes to the war between Venice and Ragusa at the beginning of the 15th century when Randolfo led the Venetians against Ragusa in 1420, but did not capture it. The speaker tells the story of the soldiers of this Silk war; as they fight and go through hills; they see some men carrying unknown things on their shoulders.

By the end of poem there are some explicit allusions to "Frantz Joseph of Austria" (line 110) and some friends of Ezra Pound who participated in the First World War. Frantz Joseph, as have already stated in the first part, is the emperor who contributed to outbreak of the First World War. He declared war on Serbia on the 18th of July 1914. The speaker in this poem pictures the evilness of Frantz Joseph and it causes a lot of terror to soldiers and children especially that he is the first to declare war on Serbia. Some friends of Ezra took part in this war, what

¹ An Italian poet famous for writing the Divine Comedy that describes a journey through Hell and purgatory and paradise guided by Virgil and his idealized Beatrice (1265-1321)

² A Roman poet; author of the epic poem 'Aeneid' (70-19 BC)

proves this is; "they put Aldington on Hill 70, in a trench" (line 112); in this line, the speaker speaks of Richard

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Unreal

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Aldington, who was one of Pound's friends, who served as a junior officer in the British army (1915-1917). Aldington took part in war especially in the French warfare where he escaped death several times. Another soldier that the speaker alludes to is Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915), who is a friend of Pound as well, Henri, is skilled with extreme cruelty in the war. Additionally, in line 123, the speaker alludes to "ole T.E.H. he went to it"; T. E.H is an allusion to Pound's friend Thomas Ernest Hulme (1883-1917). Hulme was an English philosopher and poet who was killed in the First World War.

The range of allusions that are used in this epic demonstrate that Pound is deeply influenced by the upheavals of the twentieth century. Hence, while alluding to the First World War and its horrible consequences, the speaker also alludes to the Russian Revolution which had broken out some time before the end of the war. What proves this is "Looka vat youah Trotzsk is done, e iss" (Line 206). This alludes to Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), who was an aide to Lenin during the Russian revolution of 1917. Trotsky accepted the humiliating conditions of the treaty of "Brest Litovsk" (line 212) so as to obtain peace with the central powers so that "Bolsheviki" (line 229) referring to Bolsheviks could promote the revolution in Russia.

The Waste Land well entails allusions to politics. Yet, unlike *The Cantos XVI* *The Waste Land* is difficult. The difficulty lies in finding explicit allusions to politics. Ezra Pound uses names of soldiers, geographical locations, and historical figures. This, as read, is lacking in *The Waste Land*, but in its meaning, and in its use of some names and figures, some allusions to political events can be depicted. Its first section "The Burial of the Dead" is an account of the childhood of a Bavarian woman who could undoubtedly allude to the pre-war period. Moreover, it entails a reference to "sprouting corpses", which are an allusion to the cost and horrible consequences of the First World War. In the second part, "A Game of Chess", there are some allusions to war preparations, especially in Lil's preparation for her husband Albert coming back from war. But, the most significant allusion to the First World War is in *The Waste Land*'s last part "What The Thunder Said". These lines depict the speaker's deep worry about the dramatic change of Europe after the end of the war.

What is the sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

A woman drew her (lines 367-377)

The speaker is deeply concerned with the decay of Western Europe after the First World War. With this collapse, the speaker recognizes that many other problems may occur; Europe sees a moral and a financial ruin, and war brings the breakdown of spiritual values. Financially, Europe lost billions of dollars in making guns and paying soldiers, and lost millions of soldiers and innocent civilians. The above mentioned lines may also allude to the rise of population in Europe, and the rise of the consciousness that later on led to the outbreak of the Russian revolution at that time.

It is evident that T. S. Eliot could not escape the influence of political upheavals of the twentieth century on his poetry. Accordingly, he uses a range of allusions to moments in the period before and after the First World War. Via allusions, Eliot as well as Pound "question and severely criticize the religious, social and political ideology that structures our lives" (Beasley, 2007). For Eliot, the First World War left nothing but a damage of civilization. A damage in which the Bavarian woman in "The Burial of the Dead" and Lil and her husband Robert in "A Game of Chess" are all victims of; a war that degraded civilization to the utmost peak.

For Pound, the range of political allusion thoroughly examined in his "Bolsheviki" proves that he could not too escape the influence of the First World War and the Russian revolution on his thinking and then his poetry. Via his epic, Pound alludes to the disastrous consequences of the war especially that he lost many of his friends during that war. Allusions to political events and political figures show Pound's deep engagement with the politics of the period.

The poetry of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot is not messy or meaningless. It rather is meant for the intelligent reader who is able to make that connection between poetry and the world. As said earlier, poetry is personal, yet it can never be set apart from the political and social change during which it is produced. Modern society of the twentieth century, along with its complexities brought two horrific wars which were a burden that the poets could not bear, and then reproduce that complex life via the use of complicated terms.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Paper

Cultural values influence on learning style preferences: A case of Leribe Senior Secondary School, Lesotho

Mpholo Leoisa and Shanah Mompoloki Suping*

Department of Mathematics and Science Education, University of Botswana, Botswana.

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This study was conducted with senior secondary schools Form Four learners doing science in the Leribe District of Lesotho. It sets out to probe the possibility of the influence of cultural values on students' learning style preferences and their possible differences by gender. Filled questionnaires were collected from the eleven schools from which the study was conducted. Also, focus group discussions, with equal representation of both genders, were conducted in six of the eleven schools representative of all the regions under study. The quantitative data were subjected to SPSS analysis and the MANOVA results gave significant multivariate main effect for school location. Results showed that the learners were culturally socialized to be respectful to authority and had a visual learning style preference in the Highlands and Lowlands with no gender differences.

Key words: Learning style preference, Senior secondary school, Cultural values, Gender differences, Lesotho, Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Culture, gender and level of education have been found to influence learning in a locality (Joy and Kolb, 2009). Prophet (1990) makes reference to culture and language in the case of Botswana and observes that:

...the quality of learning in the classroom here in Botswana may not be drastically improved by curriculum reform... The problem is more fundamental and is related to the issues of culture and language (p. 116).

On the other hand, Tabulawa (2013) generalizes this observation to the African continent and refers to what

he calls the *African social structure*, the child rearing African practices that emphasize the domination and subordination of the child. At the end, domination and subordination are internalized as subjective realities by the children. Since the teachers would have been conditioned the same way too, both they and the children they teach carry this cultural baggage to the school setting and operate within its influence. A person's culture and way of socialization largely influence that person's view of issues in general. Tabulawa (2013, p. 94) quips, "... teaching methods have social and cultural origins; they are contextual". In different societies, there are different ways of passing on knowledge from generation to

*Corresponding author. E-mail: suping@mopipi.ub.bw.

generation. The knowledge an individual acquires from what they are taught depends on material complexity, age of learner, methods of teaching, learner's learning style preferences and the learner's immediate environment. "Learning is composed of individual traits people use to interact with situations and objects, and the intersections of these traits indicate individual learning styles" (Erdem, 2009, p. 156). Vermont and Vermetten (2004, p. 369) observe that "[c]ultural differences in pedagogical and educational practices may give rise to differences in learning pattern structures." By the same token, Park (2000, p.250) states that "[r]esearch has identified cultural differences in the learning styles of various ethnic groups and group differences between high achievers and low achievers." In support of the existence of cultural influence on learning style preference, Woodrow and Sham (2001) found that the British-Chinese learners preferred working on their own and in quiet classrooms than in groups. Unlike their British-European counterparts, they got nervous and embarrassed when they had to work in groups. British-Chinese learners were not comfortable with asking or being asked questions.

The British-Europeans on the contrary preferred group work and took time to complete their work. They liked learning wherein new knowledge was related to the previously learned one. Unlike their British-Chinese counterparts, memorising was the least preferred mode of learning. They liked group work and were happy with teachers that encouraged group work. They were relaxed with asking and being asked questions. A lot of studies have covered different permutations of learning style preference and other factors such as authoritative teachers, collegial teachers, gifted students, small groups, achievement, attitudes, learning along, learning with peers, learning with teacher, team teaching and a host of other variables (Dunn et al., 2001).

It must be said though that although the culture and gender dimensions have been studied in contexts different than the current study, gaps still exist. For example, Joy and Kolb (2009) looked at the impact culture has on learning style and the relative effect it has when compared to other demographic variables like gender, age, level of education and area of specialization. Culturally different regions of the world as identified by other studies were compared. Of interest to the Joy and Kolb study was the Sub-Saharan Africa region (Joy and Kolb, 2009, p. 77) that consisted of Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa (Black sample), Zambia and Zimbabwe. This cluster may have suggested a near homogenous group; it must however be pointed out that the cultures in this sub-group are very different and that in fact certain elements would have been left out by leaving countries like Botswana and Lesotho out of the study; hence, the relevance of this study.

Lesotho as a country has a very rich culture, one of which is to observe and respect elders. This includes

taking orders without questioning authority. This authority is two-fold, based on age or gender. It is common to find males who have just begun married life to still be given directives by their parents because "[t]he family is still the dominant unit, and respect for the elder generation is important" (Lesotho, 2011, p. 1). There is a strong suspicion that this sort of culture of respect could influence learning style preferences of Basotho learners at senior secondary because "[a]lthough there is not one general characterization encompassing all cultures, an individual's culture, family background, and socio-economic situation can be important external factors affecting learning" (The Complexity of Learning (n.d.); Culture, gender, and learning preference section, para. 5). Joy and Kolb (2009) found factors contributing significance to variance to be culture, gender, educational level and area of specialization.

To add to the complexity of the dynamics in learning, gender dimensions as they relate to learning style preference have also been reported in some studies (Park, 2000). This gender dimension needs to be explored more given the importance ascribed to gender roles in African settings, Lesotho included.

Embedded within these cultural African practices are engendered norms and customs. For example, Tabulawa (2013, p.101) quips that "[c]hildren are taught that obedience to and respect for elders is very important" in Tswana child rearing practices. Associated with this hierarchy, which is based on age, is also the gender dimension that places the male ahead of the female without any merits to it. These dynamics, cultivated first in society at home, entrench themselves in pedagogical practices in schools.

This paper is premised on the conviction that given appropriate teaching methods that take cognizance of students' learning needs, most students' learning difficulties can be solved (Mahajan and Singh, 2003). For example, Dunn et al. (2001) reported that students who learnt under conditions matching their preferred learning styles performed significantly better and developed more positive attitudes than their peers who were not in their preferred learning style conditions.

Consequently, aware therefore of the learning difficulties that students have, especially in the sciences, and cognizant of the existence of a plethora of teaching strategies and methodologies out there as attempts to resolve these difficulties (Mahajan and Singh, 2003; Laight, 2004), this paper attempts to look at the importance of the interplay between learning style preference and the cultural dimension in the African context, with special emphasis on gender, specifically in the Lesotho region of Leribe and muse about a possible way forward.

Specifically, this paper will attempt to look into the differences in cultural practices in the different areas of the Leribe region of Lesotho and how these influence students' learning style preferences. Studies that looked into personal learning style preference and cultural

traditions did not link the two (Naserieh and Sarab, 2013). A typical question might be: What kind of learning style do students who come from an authoritarian background prefer? Authoritarian here could imply a typical traditional top-down practice that places people hierarchically based on age and or gender (See Tabulawa, 2013 for a discussion of age and time and how this translates into 'wisdom' in the elderly in society). A more general question might be; how do the different cultural practices of the different Leribe areas of Lesotho translate into learning style preference?

This paper will not address arguments of how learning takes place or even whether during learning, there is transfer or transition (Hager and Hodkinson, 2009), but will assume that all the necessary preparations would have been made and the students are in a position to learn and seek how their cultural practices will influence their learning style preference as well as how gender plays a part in this preferred learning style.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, aware of the advantages and disadvantages of both the qualitative and quantitative methods, a mixed methods approach was used to take advantage of the strength of each approach.

Population

The population of this study comprised Form four science learners in Lesotho. The schools were under three different proprietorships. Two schools are classified as government, two private, and the rest missionary schools although under different denominations. The class sizes ranged between 70 and 80 across the different schools.

Lesotho has four geographical regions namely: the Highlands, Foothills, Senqu River Valley, and the Lowlands. The schools picked were in three of these regions. The Region from which no school was picked is the Senqu River Valley because the district from which the study was done does not extend to this region. In other words, schools in the Leribe region do not extend to the Senqu River Valley district.

Methods, sample and sampling

Due to budgetary constraints as already alluded to, a multi-stage cluster sampling approach was used to allow for a cross section of the student population in the area of study without involving the numbers that would have had to be used if pure random sampling was used. Consequently, the first cluster was regions, in which three regions were conveniently chosen. These were the Highlands, Foothills and Lowlands. The Senqu River Valley region was not included in the study due to difficulty in accessing by road.

The second stage was choice of schools in the regions picked and 11 schools were chosen. Out of these 11 schools, six easily accessible schools were also chosen for the focus group discussions such that both genders were equally represented. These were done during school hours, especially at study time in the afternoons. It was left to the teacher assigned by head of department to assist the researcher decide who in the different classes would participate. The interviews were conducted as a way of triangulating the data that was gathered using the quantitative

five-point Likert scale questionnaire. For each school, one such discussion was held.

The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using a rating scheme developed during the pilot stage in Botswana where the first author was a student and the second author was the supervisor. For consistency, only the first author coded and analyzed the interview transcripts. The coding schemes had been previously agreed upon between the authors.

The third and last stage of the cluster sampling was choice of students who actually participated in the study. In some cases, the learner questionnaires were given and collected on the same day. In other cases, due to logistical challenges, the questionnaires were left with school heads of departments who then tasked a teacher in the department to administer the questionnaires at a time convenient to the students.

This arrangement had implications for the teacher's choice of students even though they were given instructions to randomly select half the class with equal representation by gender. One such could be the temptation on the part of the teacher to only select academically better performing students. Nonetheless, the results should give us a window into the possible results generated through a random sample. In other words, care should be taken in interpreting the results. The responses to the quantitative questionnaire were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS 16. The learner questionnaire was adopted from Reid (1984). This instrument is known for its validity issues on some of its subscales (Naserieh and Sarab, 2013); nevertheless, a "perfect learning style measure is a fantasy", perhaps explaining why it has continued to find use despite its shortcomings (Prajapati et al., 2011, p 70). Notwithstanding the many learning style preference instruments available (Dunn et al, 2001), some are better than others; it was felt that the adapted Reid instrument would be suited for this study. It was a 30 item questionnaire with six themes viz: Vision, Auditory, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Individual, and Group.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Learners were asked to explain how the way they were raised in their homes influenced the way they related to their teachers in class. The researcher wanted to see how far the learners' cultural values and practices in the different geographical locations could impact on their learning style preferences. The assumption though, was that there could be different cultural values per region with the Highlands approximating what was traditionally the Basotho culture. This assumption is based on the nature of the country's terrain that renders some parts of the country inaccessible and hence less affected and 'contaminated' by foreign cultures, which are largely copied through exposure to mass media. Some of these areas still cannot access televisions, newspapers and magazines regularly. Below are themes that were generated by students' responses.

Authority should not be questioned

Surprisingly, responses throughout all areas covered by this study indicated similar cultural values, one of which is that authority cannot be questioned and elders should be respected. The followings are some of the students' responses. Pseudo-names have been used.

Thabo: I choose to be quiet if my teacher does not understand my view point on some issue in class because I was raised not to argue with teachers or elders.

Lebo: I sometimes take things as I am told because I respect my teacher as an elder not because I agree to the view.

Puleng: I was raised to take that an older person is always right.

Lefa: I was raised to bottle my dissatisfaction with elders, I cannot even complain about my teacher at home.

Thato: My parents would always find a fault with me if I complain about my teacher so I no longer voice my dissatisfaction.

Nthoto: I was raised to keep quiet if unhappy and not to stand up to my teacher.

These responses are testimony of the socialization that the learners have been through. One thing is clear from all of them, that the learners were raised to observe authority and respect elders. Whilst respect for authority is positive and should be encouraged, it unfortunately at times compromises students' education as they would sit with unresolved issues in the name of cultural values. This becomes problematic especially in cases where, as in the constructivist views of education, students are expected to pronounce their views on classroom interactions and argue their positions through, which need not be in congruence with those of the teachers.

Differences by gender

Differences by gender were not observed in this study. This is in stark contrast to other studies. For example, Prajapati et al. (2011) alluded that learning style literature suggests that gender plays an important role in influencing learning styles. In their study however, they found differences by gender in some subscales and not others, and concluded that "females were on average more likely to have a reflective and visual learning style in comparison to males" (p. 73). Joy and Kolb (2008) also found that gender, among other factors, had an impact on learning style preference, albeit to different levels.

Differences by geographical location

The three geographical areas had the following number of students: Highlands, 40; Foothills, 80; Lowlands, 135.

The reliability with 30 items was $\alpha = .65$. The Box's M test = 46.858 was not significant ($p = .357 > \alpha = .001$). This meant that there were no significant differences between covariance matrices. Since the assumption of the multivariate tests was not violated, Wilk's lambda was used.

The Wilk's lambda test used an alpha level of .05 and

the test was significant (Wilk's $\lambda = .908$, $F(12, 494) = 2.037$, $p < .020$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .047$). The observed power was at .930. The multivariate $\eta^2 = .047$ meant that about 5% of the multivariate variance of the dependent variables namely Visual, Tactile, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Group, and Individual was associated with School Location. A statistically significant F indicates the existence of significant differences among school location groups on a linear combination of the dependent variables (Table 1). It would therefore, be expected that there would be a difference school location wise in a likelihood of a learner being Visual, Tactile, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Group, and Individual as the learner's main learning style preference.

Given the statistical significance of the MANOVA test, there was need to do univariate ANOVA whose results are in Table 1.

Doing a MANOVA test was meant to reduce Type 1 error which gets inflated when a number of ANOVAs are done separately on individual variables especially when error rates are not adjusted for the individual tests. A pair of the independent variable *School Location* and the dependent variable *Visual* was the only one with a statistically significant result, $p < .005$ with alpha level of .008. The original alpha level of .05 was divided by six since there were six tests to be performed ($.05/6 = .008$). The significant univariate main effects were obtained for Visual, $F(2, 252)$, $p < .005$.

The task at this point was to look at the dependent variable whose univariate ANOVA was significant (Visual, $p < .005$). Table 2 shows the results of the Levene's test where the result for the variable Visual was not significant, $p > .383$ at alpha level of .008. The Scheffé tests for comparing pairwise means for groups were conducted as a result. The tests sought to find if visual learning style preference differed significantly with School Location (Table 3). That is, is visual learning style preference of a learner dependent on the learner's school location?

The one-way MANOVA yielded a significant multi-variate main effect for school location (Wilk's $\lambda = .908$, $F(12, 494) = 2.545$, $p < .020$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .047$). The observed power was at .930. With the significance of the overall test, univariate main effects were examined. Significant univariate main effect for the school location was obtained for visual learning style preference, $F(2, 252) = 5.445$, $p < .005$, $\eta^2 = .041$ and power = .844. Significant school location pairwise differences were obtained between Highlands and Lowlands.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results show that the learners in the Highlands and Lowlands largely preferred visual learning style. This could be attributed to the socialization of the learners in which respect for authority (teachers and elderly) is seen

Table 1. Univariate ANOVA tests of dependent variables.

Source	Dependent variable	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared	Observed power ^b
School Location	Visual	4.099	2	2.049	5.445	.005	.041	.844
	Tactile	2.182	2	1.091	1.745	.177	.014	.364
	Auditory	.911	2	.456	1.526	.219	.012	.323
	Kinesthetic	3.660	2	1.830	4.060	.018	.031	.719
	Group	.134	2	.067	.112	.894	.001	.067
	Individual	4.327	2	2.164	2.402	.093	.019	.482

Table 2. Pairwise comparisons on the significant Univariate tests.

Levene's test of equality of error variance				
	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Visual	.963	2	252	.383
Tactile	.384	2	52	.682
Auditory	.513	2	252	.599
Kinesthetic	1.435	2	252	.240
Group	.312	2	252	.732
Individual	.331	2	252	.719

Table 3. Pairwise differences of means.

Dependent Variable	Scheffe						
	(I) Respondent's school location	(J) Respondent's school location	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	98.3% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Visual	Highlands	Foothills	-.3000	.11880	.043	-.6419	.0419
		Lowlands	-.3635*	.11044	.005	-.6814	-.0457
	Foothills	Highlands	.3000	.11880	.043	-.0419	.6419
		Lowlands	-.0635	.08656	.764	-.3126	.1856
	Lowlands	Highlands	.3635*	.11044	.005	.0457	.6814
		Foothills	.0635	.08656	.764	-.1856	.3126

as paramount. Whenever this is the case, there is not much arguing of one's point of view even when one feels unhappy about some issues in class lest they be mistaken for being disrespectful. Naserieh and Sarab (2013) discussed similar findings where it was concluded that learning style is a function of individual preference and that it might even be context dependent.

The cultural socialization of the Basotho learners in the regions under the study could be thought to have influenced the visual learning style preference and according to Holtbrügge and Mohr (2009, p. 24) "...some cultural values can affect learning style preferences of students, while other facets do not seem to have an impact". It is therefore important for teachers to identify

those cultural values that impact on learners' learning styles in order to move closer to "the desirability of the convergence of educational systems" (Holtbrügge and Mohr 2009, p. 24) because educational systems draw from cultural values and address national goals and aspirations.

It can be claimed from these results though that even within the same ethnic/race group there could be significant differences in learning style preferences across regions of the same country. The learning style preference for learners in Highlands and Lowlands has been found to be visual and that is not the case with learners in the Foothills.

In view of the results obtained from this study, whilst

admitting that there is a need for more research in the area for the case of Lesotho, and perhaps the Southern African region as a whole, where there are possible cross cultural fertilisations, a number of recommendations could be made. For one, teachers should try to use more visual materials including but not limited to textbooks, chalkboard, films and videos, charts, simulations, graphs, computer graphics, and graphic organizers to provide effective instruction in science for Leribe senior secondary school learners. This should not be difficult to achieve given the advent of the internet and the vast array of teaching resources that can be used to achieve this end. It should be borne in mind though that some learners could be multimodal and as such teachers need to be vigilant that the learners are not treated as though they were all unimodal in terms of their learning style preferences.

It is imperative that teacher training institutions take keen interest in research studies in the field of perceptual learning style preferences of learners. That would enable the institutions to train student teachers to take note of learning style preferences and address them in their teaching when they get to schools. The very institutions could begin teaching their student teachers in response to their learning style preferences in order for student teachers to see what it means to do it. This would be more critical in the first and second years of study at colleges, when the students are not so different from students at the secondary school level in most developmental departments.

There are international schools which could provide pockets of different ethnic groups that could give better results than the current ones. It may be worth visiting these schools for further inquiry in this subject. It may also be necessary to look at learners with differing academic abilities and age groups within the same culture to check how their learning style preferences would be.

Conclusion

This study sought to look into the dynamics between learning style preference and culture and possible influence of gender in these dynamics. It was found that students' learning style preferences differed as a function of region of Lesotho with no differences by gender. This lack of differences by gender differs from other studies and no possible explanation has been proposed. Differences in learning style preferences were attributed to cultural practices of Basotho. Students in the Highlands and Lowlands were visual, whereas the Foothills students were not.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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