



Cultural and gender sensitivity in English literary digital film adaptations

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Abstract

Cultural and Gender Sensitivity in English Literary Digital Film Adaptations explored the elements that pertain to cultural and gender sensitivity, the roles of the characters portrayed in the movie in terms of gender, and the gender expectations they follow or fight against. To strengthen the advocacy on cultural and gender sensitivity in the preparation and evaluation of instructional materials in English such as modules and textbooks, to apply gender-fair language in communication, and use film-viewing as a way to develop critical thinking skills are the objectives of the research. Content analysis was used in this qualitative research, in which data were collected from Crazy Rich Asians, Little Women, and Mulan. Significant dialogues of the characters were noted. The movies defied the notion of gender stereotyping and provided a new perspective on gender characteristics, which uplifted the role of both men and women in society. The movies demonstrated women as strong and independent, like Rachel Chu in Crazy Rich Asians, Jo March in Little Women, and Mulan in the film Mulan. On the other hand, men can be affectionate and emotional, like Nick Young in Crazy Rich Asians, Mr. March in Little Women, and Mr. Zhou in Mulan. It was found that norms and other aspects of culture affect gender roles and expectations. It is recommended to utilize film viewing as part of the teaching-learning activity to increase students' awareness of cultural and gender sensitivity and strengthen information campaigns on cultural and gender sensitivity through training on responsible, effective module writing to ensure culture- and gender-sensitive instructional materials.

Keywords: cultural, digital, film adaptations, gender, gender roles, sensitivity

Introduction

Cultural Sensitivity provides individuals with empathy and an understanding of the feelings of others. It is an important factor that allows positive interaction and treatment of those who differ in ethnicity, gender, culture, or other ways that constitute differences (Levey and Cheng, 2021) ^[9]. Hence, at this time in the digital age, where information is acquired instantly, more people encounter peer pressure, cultural bias, and gender stereotyping. For instance, in gender stereotyping or sexism, where a stereotype is a widely accepted judgment or bias about a person or group, these stereotypes about gender can cause unequal and unfair treatment from another person. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month (LGBT Pride Month) is celebrated annually in June to honor the 1969 Stonewall riots and works to achieve equal justice and equal opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) Americans (Youth.Gov, 2021) ^[19]. In terms of cultural and gender sensitivity, there are still many issues encountered even if the world is in the epoch of digital and information technology. The New York Times has documented a surge of anti-Asian hate crimes during the coronavirus pandemic, including the deaths of six Asian women during the recent mass shooting in Atlanta (Xu, 2021) ^[18], as cited by The Learning Network, New York Times (2021). Movies, as examples of multimodal texts, are popular teaching and learning materials that influence learners' cultural and gender sensitivity. In the gender aspect, for instance, the largely absent, passive princes of the 1930s and 1950s, and the muscular, brave heroes of the 1980s and 1990s appear to have been succeeded by a troop of sensitive, fearful, but dashing men in the 21st century,

thus supporting the argument that the men of Disney are complicated, to say the least, and it was concluded that several popular press articles have suggested that princess characters in “2000s to 2010s” Disney Princess movies have become more androgynous and balanced in their expression of masculine and feminine behavior (Hine *et al.* 2018) ^[8].

To strengthen the advocacy on cultural and gender sensitivity in the preparation and evaluation of instructional materials in English such as modules and textbooks, to apply gender-fair language in communication, and to use film-viewing as a way to develop critical thinking skills are the objectives of the research.

Theoretical Framework

Social learning theorists believe that imitation and identification are important for the development of sexuality. Peer pressure also influenced sexuality. Humans want to be liked; therefore, they may engage in certain behaviors because their peers encourage them (Carroll 2016) ^[2]. Gender Theory is both philosophical and literary. “One is not born, one is made a woman,” the French philosopher and novelist Simone de Beauvoir wrote of her view that women, in contrast to men, acted following men’s view of them and not according to their lights. This analysis drew on phenomenological and existential philosophy that portrayed the development of the individual subject or self-concerning an object or “other” (Smith, 2019) ^[16].

Subsequently, existential and phenomenological feminists have focused on how women have been marginalized and defined as “other” in patriarchal societies. Some feminist theorists focus specifically on how masculinity develops through socialization and how its development interacts with the process of developing femininity in girls (Crossman, 2020) ^[4]. The distinction between males and females to recognize individual differences in gender, especially in schema development, is cited in the gender schema theory. Cultural influences on Gender Schema are possible; for example, a child who lives in a very traditional culture might believe that a woman’s role is in the caring for and raising of children, while a man’s role is in work and industry. Through these observations, children can form schemas related to what men and women can and cannot do (Cherry, 2020) ^[3]. In terms of cultural and gender sensitivity, equal rights of both males and females are highly valued. This uplifts a person’s dignity as a human being. “Humanistic or person-centered psychologists believe that humans strive to develop the best of their abilities and achieve self-actualization. This is easier if people are raised with unconditional positive regard, which involves accepting another person without any stipulations or conditions. In other words, there are no rules a person must follow to be loved” (Carroll, 2016) ^[2]. Hence, Humanism called for the comprehensive reform of culture, the transfiguration of what humanists termed the passive and ignorant society of the “dark” ages into a new order that would reflect and encourage the grandest human potentialities (Grudin, 2020) ^[7].

Research Questions

1. What elements of the movie pertain to cultural sensitivity?
2. What elements of the movie pertain to gender sensitivity?
3. How are characters in movies affected by cultural and gender sensitivity issues?

Definition of Terms

Content Analysis. It is a systematic and descriptive approach to analyzing the content or meaning of communicative messages and phenomena.

Cultural Sensitivity. The ability to recognize, understand, respect, and react appropriately to the behaviors of people who belong to a cultural or ethnic group that differs substantially from their own.

Digital Film. This is any storage medium used in a digital camera to capture and store images. The term digital is related to computer-mediated means where it is saved, copied, transferred, or downloaded through a computer or an electronic gadget.

English literary digital film adaptation. These literary works, such as best-selling fiction and non-fiction, have been made into films or movies for artistic, commercial, educational, and entertainment purposes.

Gender Sensitivity. The act of being aware or sensitive to the ways people think about gender, as well as their attitudes toward it. This upholds gender equality and equity and tries to ensure that people rely less on assumptions about traditional and outdated views on the roles of men and women.

Instructional Materials. Content, information, or topic is conveyed within a course or subject. These include lectures, modules, readings, textbooks, multimedia components, and other course resources.

Methodology

Research Design

Content analysis, defined as a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication, was used in this qualitative study. In this study, data were collected from three English literary digital film adaptations: the 2018 movie, *Crazy Rich Asians*; the 2019 film, *Little Women*; and the 2020 motion picture, *Mulan*. Content analysis is qualitative and focuses on interpreting and understanding data.

Research Instrument

Crazy Rich Asians, a romantic comedy 2018 film, is based on the 2013 novel by Kevin Kwan (Ashton, 2020) ^[1]. *Little Women*, a 2019 American period drama film based on the novel or book published in 1868 and 1869, written by Louisa May Alcott. *Mulan* is a 2020 American fantasy action drama film based on an ancient folk story called the *Ballad of Mulan*, a short folk story comprising 392 Chinese characters created in the Northern Wei Dynasty. The *Ballad of Mulan* has been a popular tale since the Tang Dynasty (Lily, 2021) ^[11]. The researcher came up with three films, *Crazy Rich Asians*, the latest versions of *Little Women* and *Mulan*, which were shown in 2018, 2019, and 2020, respectively, which contributed to the relevance of the films in the digital world as adaptations. Aside from film viewing, the researcher took notes on the names of the characters, dialogues, and significant scenes in the films, which helped a lot in analyzing and interpreting the data. Hence, listening, viewing, writing, and critical thinking skills were utilized in this aspect to develop a more objective analysis, particularly on culture and gender.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher categorized or “coded” words, themes, and concepts within the texts and then analyzed the results (Luo, 2019) ^[13]. Since the basis or output of the study is the

preparation and evaluation of instructional materials in English, the use of the English language category was considered.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Aside from watching the three films several times, the researcher took notes on essential details of the films, such as important words, dialogues, characters, themes related to culture and gender, and other relevant information in the movies that link to cultural and gender sensitivity. The researcher coded the data using headphones, where portions of the story plot and other elements were played and viewed several times and written on sheets of paper to obtain the exact words and dialogues mentioned by the characters. In addition, the researcher applied within-case analysis, in which the questions regarding the analysis and discussion of the study were used and answered carefully. A cross-case analysis was conducted, in which similarities and differences between and among characters and situations where cultural and gender sensitivity issues and concerns were considered.

Results and Discussion

1. What elements in the movie pertain to cultural sensitivity?

A. Crazy Rich Asians

English is spoken most of the time by characters in movies. Through the use of language, one can become aware of another culture. Learning the language allows for the absorption of biases and cultural assumptions that are viewed as an index of people's social values and attitudes. Pointing out the culture featured in the film that relates to gender sensitivity, the introductory scene provides a flashback to 1995 in London. It is raining so hard, Eleanor Young, with Nick, Astrid, and her mom, soaked in the rain, asks the Front Desk Staff of London Calthorpe Hotel about their reservation and demands that they be shown to their suite, where the staff replies that she has no reservation. The hotel staff reminds Eleanor of being a private hotel, and it is fully booked. The Hotel Manager even suggests that she may find another accommodation somewhere and explore China Town. She insists, however, that they have a reservation and ask to allow her to call her husband, which according to her, is the least that they can do. When she returns to the hotel, the Hotel Manager warns her to leave, or else he calls the police. Eventually, the Hotel Manager realizes that the long Custody of the Hotel has ended because the property is already sold to the Youngs of Singapore, mentioned by the owner, Lord Calthorpe, whom he also says Eleanor is rightfully called The Lady of the House. The hotel manager and staff are surprised and embarrassed by what they have heard. Indeed, upon analyzing the scene, the comment of the Hotel Manager has to do with racial discrimination in the manner he talks to Eleanor.

The way Eleanor, Nick, Astrid, and her mother look – soaked in the rain – while asking the Front Desk staff and the Hotel Manager about their suite reservation, is an example of the notion of seeing the person for the first time or the so-called first impression – which is misinterpreted as being unable to afford to stay in a private hotel. In short, somehow they do not look like they come from a well-off family. In addition, they were Asian. The conflict between the East and the West, the Rich and the Poor, and the difference between high and low social rank and status are noticeable. Racial

discrimination was observed in this situation. When Kerry, Rachel Chu's mother informs her that wearing red creates a good impression because it is a symbol of good fortune and fertility.

On the other hand, another situation is when Mr. Goh, Peik Lin's father, frankly comments that red is no longer trendy unless Rachel is an envelope. It is also remarkable that Eleanor does not agree with the idea of pursuing one's passion because it is very American. She informs Rachel that in Singapore, parents are obsessed with molding the life of their children. The same is seen in Rachel as an Economics Professor when she describes Curtis - one of her students – when they play the game of mahjong as her teaching strategy in discussing the lesson about Number Theory. During her class discussion, it was straightforward to say that Curtis was cheap. As this is in New York, the use of direct and straightforward language is common. According to her, Curtis does not play using logic or math, but he uses his psychology. She further reiterates that the brain hates the idea of losing something valuable to people to the extent of abandoning rational thought and making some important decisions. Thus, Curtis is not playing how to win, but he is playing not to lose, which Rachel further emphasizes. The use of language is effective in the sense that statements can challenge the critical thinking skills of the viewer.

Another relevant part of language is the use of modern terms such as posh, snobby, and smashy, as used by Peik Lin in describing the crazy-rich Youngs to Rachel. The terms used are modern examples of language change or the evolution of languages. Moreover, this statement, "Catch this! You, gold-digging bitch" is from the scene where Rachel sees the statement written on the glass wall of the resort room at a party of the bride-to-be, Araminta Lee. The statements are blunt and offensive, demonstrating discrimination. What is more striking about the use of language is the idea of pursuing one's passion, which is very American according to Eleanor Young because it is against Chinese tradition. The Chinese need to put the family first, instead of chasing their passion. She tells Rachel that her mother is open-minded because she allows Rachel to pursue her passion, unlike in the case where parents are obsessed with shaping the life of their children. Another aspect of the use of language is when a frank comment is uttered by Oliver T'sien, Nick's cousin when he says that someone forgets to wear a bra when he sees the actress Kitty Pong, Alistair's girlfriend. The gender-bias language is exemplified in this section, which depicts the reality that people give an impression to another person based on what they observe about them. This only shows that it is already part of one's way of expressing his or her opinion or impression of an individual, which is also an avenue to evaluate the effect of this behavior on another person. Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion, but a certain freedom has a responsibility.

Discrimination is demonstrated when Eleanor tells Rachel that she will never be enough for her son Nick. The use of words is bold and intense, leaving a lasting impression of Eleanor's shame against Rachel as a woman she describes as a poor Chinese American daughter of a single mom. In a deeper aspect, it is about the character of Eleanor despising the culture of Americans, particularly in the pursuit of one's passion for leaving the family. Eleanor is so particular about devotion to family and the obligation of living a legacy, which makes it hard for her to accept American culture.

B. Little Women

English is the medium of communication for the characters, and the setting is Concord, Massachusetts in the United States. Language change is inevitable, as observed in the word Scribbling, used by Jo March instead of writing. Spinsters were also mentioned instead of Single Lady or Woman. One of the many interesting dialogues in the movie that reflects the culture of the American people in the 18th and 19th centuries is the conversation between Jo or Josephine and Aunt March, where Aunt March tells Jo that the only way to get unmarried is to be rich. In this statement, Aunt March says that a woman, to be financially stable, is to marry a man. However, Jo is strong in her conviction that there are few precious ways for a woman to earn her own money, meaning that a woman should not only marry a man for financial security. Jo March also believes that a woman should not only be fit for love because women have their minds and talents. For Jo, women can also dream and accomplish many things. The culture of the people during this period was observed in a conversation between Amy March and Laurie Laurence. Amy asserts that she is a woman. As a woman, there is no way for her to make her own money, not enough to earn a living or support her family. If she had her own money, that money would belong to her husband the moment they married. If they had children, they would have been his property. For Amy, marriage was an economic proposition. Aunt March has a significant influence on how Amy views marriage as an economic proposition. For someone like Amy, who has been with her Aunt March for several years, in a certain way, has that point of view about the reason why women get married.

Meg March was quite different in terms of the idea of being married. She marries John Brooke, Laurie's private tutor, whom Aunt March describes as penniless. Despite this, Meg loved her husband. Language plays an important role; because of this, the culture shared by characters is vividly expressed.

It can therefore be deduced that even language is constructed around gender, and that gender roles extend into social behavior. Language is an essential part of the culture and an effective tool for communication. When an individual utilizes language, it reflects a portion of his or her culture, especially when he or she speaks with an accent and with the use of native language. Thus, culture is shared through language.

C. Mulan

English is used in films as a character's medium of communication. The culture of the Chinese is emphasized in the movie, and the use of language is a great help in depicting it in the story. Thus, the way language is utilized in films is congruent with what David (2005) ^[5] mentioned, that language is a very essential tool in communication. It articulates consciousness, reflects culture, and affects socialization.

Language is not only used as a medium of communication, but also depicts a mix of cultural influences with a focus on dominant cultural values that include religion, tradition, and even rituals.

2. What elements in the movie pertain to gender sensitivity?

A. Crazy Rich Asians

First, the presence and combination of male and female characters in the film are gender sensitive. For instance, in the

character of Rachel Chu, the female lead role, Nick Young's girlfriend; Nick Young, the male lead role; Rachel Chu's boyfriend; Oliver, a cousin of Nick, describes and claims himself as the rainbow sheep in the family; and Peik Lin Goh, called Ellen DeGeneres by her dad. The same is true for Eleanor Young, Astrid Young Teo, and Colin Kho, as well as for all the characters in the film. The character of Rachel Chu, an Asian-American protagonist in the story and an Economics Professor at New York University is gender sensitive because, as a woman, the film presents a woman who can exercise her right to work and choose a career or profession that she wants to pursue. She is described as a brave, brilliant, and clever woman not only by her mother and boyfriend Nick but also by her friend since college, Peik Lin Goh. Rachel Chu is Nick Young's girlfriend, and Nick is a History Professor also in New York University.

Nick Young was a male protagonist. He was of Chinese descent. He is known as Asia's most eligible and wealthy bachelor, who is going to attend Colin Kho's wedding in Singapore. Colin Kho is Nick Young's best friend. Singapore is the birthplace where Nick comes from a traditional Chinese family that is expected to manage their family business, but he chooses to stay in New York as University Professor, which shows his character as a man who loves to do things in his way. As Rachel's boyfriend, he has a sense of responsibility because he is willing to be with Rachel and fight for love.

Gender equality is emphasized in Nick Young's characters. He is responsible for defending Rachel from his mother and fights for his love. It is right to always consider what is best for the family; however, in the character of Nick, he has to choose between his happiness, that is, loving Rachel, and his responsibility towards his family as the next in line to manage their business. In the end, Eleanor gives her blessing and permission to let her son Nick choose love, so he fights for Rachel.

Women's empowerment, as one of the significant advocacies of gender and development, is also presented. Another important aspect is about a human or woman's right to choose and decide on her own – this is emphasized in the movie, where Rachel refuses to accept Nick's initial proposal to marry him. This is one of the highlights of the film - the part where Rachel invites Eleanor to play the game of mahjong with her. In this scene, a significant aspect relative to gender is reflected: the significant role of women in society. This is the heart of the film where Rachel says that she was raised by her mother and taught life skills such as negotiations, strategies, and corporations, where Eleanor responded that she was also taught that way.

Generally, the film highlights the significant role of men as well in society, which emphasizes gender equality and equity, which are highlighted through the lead characters Rachel Chu and Nick Young. Rachel is a woman who can exercise her right to choose a career and is brave in everything she decides on. Nick Young is an independent-minded person, characterized by the strength of character and firm conviction.

Gender equality was emphasized in the character of Oliver, a rainbow sheep in the family. The term rainbow sheep was given by Oliver himself to describe his personality. He represents the LGBTQ, where someone who prefers a particular gender role and identity can relate to him. He is supportive of Rachel and Nick's relationship to the extent that he helps Rachel to stand and fight for her love. He convinces

Rachel and tells her that it is about time that somebody must stand up against her Aunt Eleanor. It is observed in his character that he is always there every time his cousins and relatives need help.

Gender bias and stereotyping are depicted in the character of Peik Lin Goh, who is called by her father Asia's Ellen as someone who is like the famous international talk show host, Ellen DeGeneres. She is a good friend of Rachel, especially when Rachel suffers emotionally when Eleanor Young hires a private detective to get information about her family background. She supports Rachel's relationship with Nick Young. As someone rich, she provides Rachel with everything she needs and everything that has something to deal with to enhance Rachel's look and beauty. Her crazy yet funny side, as a friend and a person, is highlighted in the film. On the other hand, Eleanor Young, Nick's mother, represents an adult or middle-aged group in society. She is described as the controlling, imposing mom in the film, who does not like Rachel because she is from a middle-class family and is raised in America by a single mother. Eleanor wants to live a family tradition and legacy which is why she wants her son, Nick, to stay in Singapore for good so Nick could fulfill his duty as the heir to their family's real estate company.

Eleanor does not like the idea of choosing and pursuing a passion to the extent of leaving the family just to attain it. For her, this was American. That is why she wants her son, Nick, to stay good in Singapore and leave his teaching career in New York. In this aspect, Eleanor's character represents the traditional culture of the Chinese people, where family legacy matters. However, in the end, she allows her son, Nick, to follow his heart. She eventually gave her blessing and permission to her one and only son.

Thus, gender stereotyping is evident in the aforementioned situations because of Eleanor's belief that her son must stay in the family to manage their business. This situation also shows that Nick's choice to work in New York was not completely accepted by Eleanor. For her, the way to give honor to the family was to stay and be part of their own company.

Women's empowerment is presented in Astrid Young Teo's characters in the film. She is a beautiful and intelligent woman, known as a fashion icon. A woman of beauty, brain, and elegance in all her styles and manners. She has a strong sense of poise, charm, grace, and self-control that she remains calm even if she is hurting so much deep inside. This is observed when she confronts her husband, Michael, and tells him that he has an affair with another woman. Another thing about her is that she can buy anything she wants no matter what the price is, but she is very down to earth according to Nick, her cousin. She has several charities and a good heart for children and other people. She is a supportive wife to her husband and a good mother to her son. Although she loves Michael, as a woman, she fights for her rights and dignity when she realizes that she is not responsible for making her husband feel like a man. This is in the context where Michael feels insecure because he is married to a beautiful, rich, intelligent, and perfect woman.

B. Little Women

Several aspects of the film that pertain to gender sensitivity can be seen in the following situations: First, in the very beginning or exposition of the film, Josephine March, a writer in New York, looks for Mr. Dashwood, the publisher of the Weekly Volcano Office in New York City. Inside the office,

it was noticeable that all staff members were men. Jo is the only girl when she enters a place consists of men only. The situation depicts the middle period of the 18th to 19th centuries in the United States, where women can have careers and men generally have to work to provide income for their families. Second, Mr. Dashwood always recommends making alterations to Jo's written works because, according to him, it is too long and people want to be amused rather than preached to. Third, Dashwood insists that Jo should write short and spicy stories in which the female character should be married at the end or else dead. He also avers that girls do not like endings where the female character is unmarried. Fourth, the role and image of women in society are emphasized in the rising action of the story. Jo March and Aunt March talk about asking Jo to stay with her for a better life. However, Jo refuses to do so because she intends to make her way in this world. Aunt March replies that no one makes his or her way, which is why Jo needs to marry. Jo directly says to Aunt March that she is not married, and Aunt March exclaims that she is rich and does not need to marry. Aunt March states that this is why Jo needs to be married. Aunt March insists that for Jo to have a better life is for her to get married. Aunt March further points out that Jo needs to marry, so she can live a better life, unlike her poor mother. Jo defends her mother by saying that she loves her life. Aunt March says that Jo does not know what her mother loves:

The conversation ends with Aunt March's statement, saying that Jo does not care about marriage at that moment. Fifth, it is still in the rising action when Meg March, Jo's eldest sister, is about to get married and tells Jo that just because her dream is different from hers, it does not mean that it is not important. Meg says this because Jo does not want her to be married because she does not want to lose her sister. Sixth, Laurie reveals his true feelings about Jo, saying that he loves her. Unfortunately, Jo turned him down. Jo explained that she could not truly say yes. Jo describes herself as a homie or homebody, awkward, and hates an elegant society in which Laurie hates her scribbling and reiterates that she will never believe that she will get married. Seventh, Marmee, the mother of Little Women, says that the best thing in the world a woman can have is the love of a good man. In this situation, gender equality exists because it recognizes the important role of man as a partner.

Based on the different situations enumerated above, the unique personality of each character is revealed as each expresses his or her thoughts and establishes his or her real persona. When Jo March decides to go to New York and live her own life to follow her dream of becoming a writer, she becomes a tough woman. It can also be observed that Mr. Dashwood is a business-minded publisher and does not want an unmarried female main character; in the latter part of the movie, he is presented as the only man in the house surrounded by his wife and children who are all girls. Aunt March stands by her conviction that to remain unmarried, a woman has to be rich. Meg March was determined to be married. Laurie, who falls in love with Jo as his childhood sweetheart and close female friend, eventually falls in love with Amy after accidentally meeting her in Paris, and Marmee, who mentions the gentleness of a woman and the goodness of a man – all of these instances promote gender sensitivity centered on gender equality and equity. Regarding the denouement of the movie, Jo is revealed as a woman who falls in love. Despite Jo's headstrong trait, she finally admits her love for Friedrich and asks him not to leave.

This situation highlights the important role of both men and women, which is associated with gender equality and equity, as they fall in love despite the challenges they encounter and their differences. This only proves that if love is pure and true, there is no room for insecurities, jealousy, and inequality. When Friedrich says “his hands are empty” and Jo replies, “they are not empty,” it means a lot and that is acceptance. This situation shows gender equality on the part where anyone has the right to love and be loved for who and what a person is, and equity on the part where there is an acceptance of the status of the person, and there is a good intention of loving the person. The words, “my hands are empty,” reveal the honesty in Friedrich's character, and he also fulfills the promise of his honesty to Jo. There is no assumption on his part, but only a revelation of his sincere admiration of Jo. This film demonstrates the characteristics of a true gentleman. When Jo replies, “they are not empty,” it is an expression of faith and trust – believing in someone no matter what, looking beyond the status of the person, and expressing what is in his heart. Equity is so strong in this part because it shows the willingness of both persons to sacrifice and support each other, especially in the worst times of their lives. In other words, true love matters.

C. Mulan

One of the issues and concerns regarding gender and development, particularly Gender Sensitivity, is honoring women's rights. Hence, for a woman, it is her right to decide on her own and choose what she thinks is the best option. In the case of Mulan and her younger sister, Xiu, it is the family's tradition to be matched with a man with the help of a so-called Matchmaker. Since it has been a practice that was started by their ancestors, Mulan's parents have to obey and respect their culture as well.

However, being aware of gender sensitivity, every woman should be given the right and privilege to be given options and decide without pressure or manipulation from anyone, even from her family.

Another element that pertains to gender sensitivity is when the character named Xianniang, also called Witch, finds out that Mulan is a true lady and comments that a woman is leading an army of men. Next, when Mulan finally reveals the truth about her identity, the Emperor even invites her to be the Officer of the Emperor's Guard because Mulan saves the life of not just the Emperor but the entire kingdom and the people as well. This situation honors the courage and strength of a woman and breaks the notion that women are submissive and always conform to the dictates of society. Issues and concerns related to gender sensitivity are discussed in movies.

The gender bias language is emphasized in the part where Peik Lin's father calls her Asia's Ellen in the aspect where an individual is not supposed to call someone by another name. This substantiates that language articulates consciousness; it not only organizes one's thoughts but from infancy, people learn to use language to give utterances to basic needs and feelings. Language affects socialization; children learn a language, absorb the cultural assumptions and biases underlying language use, and see these as an index of their society's values and attitudes. This is associated with the objective of gender-fair language, which Sczesny *et al.* (2016) ^[15], cited in an article review, which proves that Gender-Fair Language (GFL) aims to reduce gender stereotyping and discrimination.

Gender discrimination is also tackled in the film in the part where Eleanor tells Rachel that her principle of pursuing her passion is American. In this situation, Rachel is judged through her choice of career and workplace because she prefers to stay in New York City. Nonetheless, women empowerment is highlighted in the movie through the characters of Rachel, Jo, and Mulan, who stand up for their rights as women.

3. How are the characters in the movies affected by cultural and gender sensitivity issues?

A. Crazy Rich Asians

In the character of Rachel, who is supposed to have a Chinese influence, Eleanor expects her to be somebody who acts, speaks, and thinks the way Chinese do, rather than American in her language, manners, and thoughts. Rachel was born and raised in New York but speaks and thinks like Americans. She loves her job in New York, which is how Colin describes her during a conversation with Nick. Rachel feels that she must live the way she is raised and trained by her mother. She has to show more of her real side rather than change everything about her just to conform to Eleanor's rules and standards. In this aspect, Rachel is fighting for her self-identity, although this is implied. She will not conform to what Eleanor wants just for her to be accepted for what and who she is as a person and a woman. In this respect, Rachel is fighting against gender expectations that describe women as submissive, less expressive, and soft-spoken.

Rachel Chu's role in the film as an Economics Professor is as a woman characterized as modern, independent, open-minded, free-spirited, and one who pursues her passion as a teacher. As the youngest professor at New York University, her teaching strategies are practical. This is obvious when she uses Mahjong as her teaching strategy. She plays mahjong with Curtis, one of her students. Her character as a career-oriented woman has a strong influence on American culture even though she is of Chinese descent. Her mother even tells her that, physically, she looks Chinese, but her mind and language are American. Her college friend Peik Lin Goh describes her using characteristics such as super sophisticated, smart person, and freaking game theory.

Rachel is called Cinderella by Nick's cousin Eddie because he finds that Rachel comes from a poor family. Eddie further emphasizes that his wife Fiona and her family own the largest shipping companies in Hong Kong, while Araminta and her family own several resorts. Because Rachel is Nick's girlfriend, she is also expected to be rich. Gender bias and stereotyping are evident in the situations mentioned, particularly in the part where Rachel is judged and criticized based on her family background and economic status. The conflict between the rich and poor is obvious, which speaks of discrimination and inequality.

Nick Young as History Professor is an example of a modern, educated, independent, open-minded man. As Rachel Chu's partner, he is responsible for his relationship with Rachel to the extent that he will do anything to make her happy. He is committed to Rachel and is always ready to protect her, particularly from his mother's opinion about Rachel and the way she treats her. As Singapore's legitimate bachelor, he is a well-mannered man. He has established himself as a college professor and wants to do things on his own, although he is next in line to inherit and take care of their family business. Nick is a man who has strong convictions, is willing to fight for Rachel, and chooses to marry her, despite all the

challenges. He is the heir, and other people call him the Crown Prince, the next in line as the Chairman of Young's company. Nick decides to stay in New York because he wants to find and do things on his own, where, unfortunately, his family thought that it was just because of Rachel - the only reason why he did not want to take the obligation and responsibility of handling the family business.

Astrid Young Teo, Michael's wife, is described in the film as beautiful, elegant, and intelligent. She is based in Shanghai and is described by her cousin Nick as awesome, grounded, and down-to-earth. She was at the top of the class at Oxford University. She is a fashion icon; her clothes and accessories are expensive. She can buy what she wants and is not even bothered or overwhelmed by price tags. She marries Michael and has a son. As a wife, she is supportive of her husband Michael, and cares for her son. Despite her almost celebrity status, she has several charities and has the image of a woman who not only has a pretty face but also a beautiful heart. Beyond her rich and famous identity, she has multiple charities and the biggest heart of any of Nick's cousins, as described and mentioned by Nick. In the latter part of the film, she finds that her husband, Nick, has an affair with another woman.

Astrid, cousin of Nick, and the wife of Michael is known by others and described by Nick as an awesome, grounded, and down-to-earth woman and cousin. As a wife, she finds that Michael has an affair with another woman: When Astrid decides to leave the house, Astrid directly confronts Michael and tells him that the problem with their marriage is not about their family's wealth. The problem is that he is a coward and he has given up on her and their son. She tells Michael that it is not her job to make him feel like a man. Astrid fights for her right as a woman, wife, and mother when she finds out about Michael's infidelity. Her conviction as a woman, wife, and mother who has self-respect has been observed in this part when she says that it is not her job to make him feel like a man, the man, or an image that makes him something that he is not. Having achieved celebrity status, she does not mind what people say about her when she attends the wedding of Colin and Araminta without Michael. She is accompanied by Ah Ma to a wedding, where everyone is surprised and whispers to one another that Ah Ma does not usually attend such a ceremony. Astrid decides to leave Michael after discovering that he is having an affair with someone. Women empowerment in Astrid's character is shown in this situation because, as a woman, she decides to let Michael realize that it is not proper to have an affair with another person just to overcome his insecurities as a man.

Michael, as a man and husband of Astrid, is insecure about his status compared with Astrid's economic status and family background. He describes himself as a commoner. Towards the end of the film, he has to let Astrid discover that he is having an affair with another woman because of the feeling and insecurity that he does not even exist or matter anyway. Michael describes himself as a commoner when he and his wife Astrid talk about attending Ah Ma's Tan Hua party and Colin and Araminta's wedding. After his work in the army, he became a CEO and married Astrid. However, he always felt inadequate and could not be measured with Astrid. She told Astrid that she could buy whatever she wanted. He tells Astrid in their confrontation that she is always the prettiest, richest, perfect girl in the room, and that he is just a lucky bastard who will never measure up. As a person and man, Michael wants to feel that Astrid can depend on him, but

because Astrid has already achieved everything, particularly her social and economic status, the more Michael feels everything he does is not enough. He always competed with his wife. Michael shows insecurities and represents gender stereotyping and gender bias because he is influenced by society's impression of a man as authoritative and a provider in the family.

Peik Lin Goh as a friend and a woman has a different way of expressing herself when it comes to hairstyle, make-up, outfit, and accessories. She is comfortable expressing herself and does not even care to think about what other people say about her. She owns a unique personality and Rachel appreciates the way she is. She has been Rachel's loyal and good friend since college. She was a frank, bubbly, funny, and supportive friend. She is always there for Rachel, from simple to complicated situations, such as listening to her problems and issues with Eleanor.

Peik Lin Goh was a college friend of Rachel. She is described by her father as Asia's Ellen, the counterpart of the famous Ellen DeGeneres as the American Comedian. She is funny and smart, yet very practical, with the way she decides on certain matters. She belongs to the so-called new rich or new money family, where she helps Rachel with her outfits and accompanies her to Ah Ma's Tan Hua party. Peik Lin has a bubbly personality that always speaks her mind. She tells Rachel that the Youngs are like Royalty when she finds that Nick, whom she is dating, is Nick Young, a member of a wealthy family. She is there for Rachel when Rachel feels devastated by Eleanor. That was the time when Eleanor even hired a private investigator to search for her family background, and Eleanor found out that Rachel was the daughter of her mom from another man. Peik Lin's character defies gender stereotyping because she does not conform to society's view of women as quiet and soft spoken. She is not bothered by people's reactions and comments because she is secure about her personality.

Eleanor, as the mother of Nick, and as a woman, will do everything for her son Nick. As a mother, she always reminds Nick to stay for good in Singapore and manage their family business because his father is not getting any younger. Unfortunately, she experienced the same struggle of not being easily accepted by Ah Ma, Nick's wealthy and crazy-rich grandmother. It took too long for Ah Ma to accept her as part of the family. Eleanor believes in a tradition in which someone has to put family first, instead of following one's passion. She further admits that Ah Ma does not want to give the family ring because Ah Ma thinks that she could not be an adequate woman for her son. Moreover, she directly tells Rachel that she will never be enough, that she will never be good enough for her son. Eleanor directly admits to Rachel of her reason for not liking her, that is because Rachel is not the same with them when it comes to economic status. The character of Eleanor exemplifies gender bias and discrimination in the way she treats Rachel. After all, she does not want Rachel to be part of their family.

B. Little Women

Jo is a writer in the movie. Her personality is not a typical woman who is gentle and feminine in her manner, which defies gender stereotypes. She is not that lady-like in her actions, yet she is an intelligent, talented, tough, and determined woman. She loved writing novels. She is paid for several stories she has written. She epitomizes an expressive, spontaneous, and sincere woman.

Apart from being a writer, she also has a part-time job as a private tutor in New York. As a sister, she is patient and understanding when it comes to Amy's childish manners, although there is a conflict between them, which is common in most sibling relationships. In the film's falling action, Jo tells Amy that life is too short to be angry at one's sister. In the early part of the movie, Jo does not want to marry because she wants to do things her way. She even tells Meg that she would rather be a free spinster and paddle her own canoe, revealing her character as an empowered and independent woman.

Jo further expresses that women have their minds, souls, and hearts. They have patience, talent, and beauty, and she is just so sick and tired to hear that people will just say that it is love and that is what all women are fit for. She said that she was lonely. She is tired of the idea that women are viewed as fit only for love, never for their minds or their talents. In this situation, Jo has to deal with all the pressures and expectations of people who, as a woman, have to be married. Meg March is the eldest among the four sisters; she wants to become a stage actress, but she marries Laurie's tutor, John Brooke. She always joins various events and parties. She lives a simple life and has two children whom she dearly loves. Moreover, she is willing to give up her ambition to become a performer because she wants to marry. Jo does not want her to marry because she does not want to lose her sister. She explains to Jo that just because her dream is different from hers, it does not mean that it is not important.

Meg March is the eldest among the four sisters, she wants to become a stage actress, but she gets married to Laurie's tutor, John Brooke. She always joins different events and parties. She lives a simple life and has two children whom she dearly loves. Moreover, she is willing to give up her ambition of becoming a performer because she wants to get married. Jo does not want her to be married yet, because she does not want to lose her sister. She explains to Jo that just because her dream is different from hers, it does not mean that it is not important. This scene is subtle, yet heart-warming because it conveys the differences among individuals regardless of how close and related they are with one another. It is a moment when one can realize that each person is unique. It informs viewers to believe in their dream, no matter how simple it is. Certainly, comparing oneself with another person is not the right thing to do because each human being has his or her place in the world.

Amy March was the most expressive among the sisters. She always spoke to her. Her dream of becoming a famous painter is supported by Aunt March, who asks her to accompany her in Europe. There is a situation where she burns Jo's manuscript because Jo does not allow her to go with her and Meg to watch a stage play. Amy feels that she is always second to Jo when it comes to everything: Even when Laurie admits that he loves Amy, she initially refuses to say yes, although Amy has been fascinated with Laurie ever since. Amy does not accept Laurie, because she knows that Laurie is in love with Jo.

Beth March is the youngest, most fragile, and quiet among the four sisters. Music has been her life, for she always plays the piano, which is supported by their rich neighbor and family friend Mr. Laurence. Mr. Laurence gave her a piano as a gift. In the film, she died of scarlet fever at a young age. She serves as an inspiration for Jo to write not for herself but for someone else. Beth can convince Jo to write for her and

pursue her career as a writer.

It is a society that decides that men are powerful and that women are powerless. Thus, stereotypes about gender strongly exist, which link with the statements that explain stereotypes about gender and can cause unequal and unfair treatment. Domestic behavior is a kind of gender stereotype; for example, some people expect that women will take care of the children, cook, and clean the home, while men take care of finances, work on the car, and do home repairs (Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc. 2021) ^[14]. Discrimination against women should be avoided. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in All Matters Related to Marriage and Family Relations. This includes ensuring the same right to enter into marriage with free and full consent and to freely choose a spouse, the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution and concerning their children, and the same personal rights as husbands and wives, such as the right to choose a family name, profession, and occupation (United Nations Publication, 2014) ^[17]. The situations only prove the reality of the predicament of women, as stated by Amy, which relates to Simone de Beauvoir's view that one is not born, one is made a woman, that women act by men's view of them.

C. Mulan

Mulan is reminded by her father to be a courageous woman for her mother, sister, and him. She is the eldest daughter who has the gift of Chi, which is supposed to exist only as a son in the family. That is why her parents would like her to marry and ask Matchmaker's help to find an auspicious husband for her because that should only be the best way for her to give honor to the family. Such a daughter could risk shame, dishonor, and exile. Mulan must hide her real identity to protect her father and family from shame and humiliation. She introduced herself to Hua Jun when she joined the Imperial Agent Soldier and was a member of the fifth battalion. Eventually, she became a warrior.

The Matchmaker points to qualities such as quiet, composed, graceful, elegant, and poised, as usually seen in a wife, and even in Mulan. However, when her younger sister sees a spider, Mulan must protect her sister because she is afraid of the spider. To avoid any trouble, Mulan places the teapot where the spider is, which causes her to move the teapot to remain in the center. However, Mulan has no control over the situation, and she has to protect her sister, which unfortunately turns into a chaotic incident. The Matchmaker presumes that the family fails to raise a good woman.

In the exposition of the plot in the film, the introduction is a narration of her father figuratively and metaphorically about Mulan's character. This is a way to describe her. The same style is used towards the end and denouement of the film's plot. She is described by her father as a young shoot, all green, unaware of the blade in the introduction, and her father says that the green shoot has grown up to the sky and her ancestors celebrate her in the vault of heavens in the last part of the story.

Mulan was precious to her family. She was also expected to bring honor to the family. Mulan is the eldest daughter who has a gift from Chi, which is powerful and infinite energy. This gift usually exists only for the sons. Being a woman and having this extraordinary gift is unusual. She must hide it to protect herself from harm and danger. A daughter with chi would risk shame, dishonor, and exile. Chi is for warriors, not

for daughters; this is what Mulan's father always tells her. Mulan, as a daughter, must fulfill her duty to bring honor to the family. According to her parents, this can happen only if she is married. The challenge is that she has to conceal her real identity as a woman and pretend to be a man. She must do this to protect her father and family.

Zhou is Mulan's father, a respected member of the army. He is a great warrior. Unfortunately, he is injured during the war, yet he is responsible and always guides Mulan in all her tasks. He trains Mulan at a young age to use the sword to protect herself from any wicked situation, but he does not want her to unleash her Chi because it will send her to exile and die, which as a father would not risk. He has no choice but to serve the emperor and fulfill his duty as a citizen of the country. Mulan's father is already old enough to be part of the army, but he must go because he is the only man to represent the family. He trains Mulan on how to use the sword and protects herself as a woman. He reminds Mulan to be a courageous woman, for her mother, sister, and father. He also tells Mulan of the significance of Phoenix and the virtues encrypted in the sword Loyal, Brave, and True. He always reminds Mulan that there is no courage without the presence of fear. Indeed, he is a man with great honor. His commitment to serve in the name of loyalty is so strong that even if he is already old, weak, and injured, he is willing to fight and bring honor to the family and country.

Based on the different roles portrayed by the characters in each movie, these prove that there is gender sensitivity in the way the characters are presented, which defies society's expectations related to this matter. The characters of Rachel, Nick, Eleanor, Astrid, Michael, Oliver, Meg, Jo, Amy, Beth, and Mulan challenge the dictate and notion of society that women are weak, emotional, unsecured, and submissive, while men are tough, emotionally strong, secure, and intimidating. Gender Schema theory asserts that children learn about male and female roles from the culture in which they live. Children adjust their behavior to align with the gender norms of their culture from the earliest stages of social development. Cultural influences on gender schemas are also possible. Children form schemas related to what men and women can and cannot do (Cherry 2020) ^[3]. Thus, gender is influenced by culture. However, every individual, man or woman, has a way of not being easily influenced and not being pressured by the dictates of society or other people.

Rachel's character and personality were influenced by her mother. Kerry trains her to pursue her passion. This is associated with the belief that imitation and identification are important in the development of sexuality. For example, individuals identify with their same-sex parents and begin to imitate them, which helps them develop their own gender identity. These behaviors are praised and reinforced (Carroll, 2016) ^[2].

As an independent man, Nick is not easily swayed by his mother's point of view in the aspect where he fights his love for Rachel. Jo remains strong in most of her choices in life, which contradicts society's impression of women as weak in decision-making and always submissive. Mulan challenges the idea that women are for domestic tasks and for being a wife when she fights in battle and protects their father and family from shame. The characters fight for gender equality and equity.

Furthermore, gender roles and women empowerment are observed in the characters of Rachel, Astrid, Jo, and Mulan who stand firm in their decisions. They break the notion of

gender stereotyping and hyperfemininity, which says that to be feminine, a woman should be naïve, soft, passive, submissive, and domesticated (Planned Parenthood, 2021), which are products of society's perception. The situations are, in fact, proof of their knowledge and sensitivity to the circumstances they encounter. As women, they are feminine, but they do not necessarily conform to society's expectations that women should exude poise and grace, and must be prim and proper. They speak what is on their minds without hesitation, which can be observed most of the time with Rachel and Jo. In the case of Astrid, she maintains her image as someone who lives a happy and secure married life, but in the end, she breaks her silence and decides to leave her husband because she tries everything to help him cope with his insecurities as a man, but gives up and thinks that it is not her duty to always make him feel like he is a man. Astrid is empowered as a woman, not because she does not believe in matrimony. She leaves Michael when she finds out that he has an affair with someone else. She thinks that it is not proper for them to always fight about roles, status, and wealth, which her husband always feels insecure about. Astrid's role does not advocate or celebrate a broken family because not even a small creature on Earth can agree with this, but she fights for her right as a woman. Astrid feels emotional violence every time Michael, her husband feels insecure and tells her about her perfection as a woman and her family's wealth in a sarcastic manner. Indeed, women's rights are human rights (United Nations Publication 2014). Other examples of violence in the family include domestic assault (physical, psychological, emotional, financial, or sexual violence), marital rape, femicide or gender-motivated killings, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and sex-selective abortion (United Nations Publication, 2014). The New Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) hold a real promise to embed advances in women's rights and include a specific goal (Goal 5) for gender equality (Global Fund for Women, 2021) ^[6]. Although characters respect people and authority, they fight for what they believe is right, to the extent of causing them a lot of emotional pain, just as in the case of Rachel when she decides to let go of Nick, and in the case of Astrid when she resolves to let go of Michael and Jo when she chooses to let go of Laurie.

Generally, the different scenes in the movie reflect the values, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the Chinese, which helps viewers enhance their awareness of culture and gender. For instance, the Chinese tradition of wearing red dresses is a sign of good fortune and fertility according to Rachel's mother. Hence, cultural awareness can also be an important factor in gender sensitivity. It simply means that if one is aware of one's culture, such as one's beliefs, traditions, and values, an individual can be more sensitive to another person. In this way, one can respect the gender of an individual. If this is the case, respect can be easily felt among groups, institutions, and society in general.

To emphasize another relevant issue on gender sensitivity, there is a scene towards the rising action of the story in the movie where Rachel Chu has the chance to have a conversation with Princess Intan and the Malay Princess. Women empowerment has been highlighted in this section. Rachel says that she read her article about microloans in the Asian Economics Journal. They talk about microloans where Princess Intan says; she receives criticism when she writes about the article. Rachel replies that her critics might have probably missed her point because Rachel believes that

microloans help women and women lift the economy. Women are equally strong partners in the economic progress of the country; as such, they should be given equal opportunities to exercise their right to be part of the nation's sustainable development. This situation validates the conviction that women's rights are fundamental human rights. These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote, and to earn a fair and equal wage (Global Fund for Women, 2021) ^[6]

Gender is social. It is the society that dictates these differences. It is the upbringing that determines what a person will become. Gender roles extend into society's behavior, in which language is constructed around gender. It is therefore expected that gender, along with other developmental issues, will be addressed using fair language practices. To maintain equity, equality, and empowerment, there must be explicit avoidance of the notion of male supremacy devaluing women, discrimination against women, gender biases, and stereotyping.

Thus, gender sensitivity respects a person as a human being. A woman needs the advice and help of a man and vice versa. On the other hand, a man needs a woman's point of view as well. The characters differ from each other, but each plays a significant role in society. Both men and women should be equal and have the privilege to exercise their rights as human beings – the right to be respected—and this is what gender sensitivity is all about.

Conclusion

1. Watching English literary film adaptations increases cultural and gender awareness. Movies are reflective of the elements that pertain to culture and gender that lead to the concept of cultural sensitivity as the ability to respect people from diverse cultures and treat them as unique individuals, while gender sensitivity is the way to value human rights.
2. Gender differences in the use of language in communication are exemplified in the characters of the films analyzed. The movies depict society's role in manifesting gender differences through the use of symbols, images, and characterization to classify men and women, career options, and roles in the family.
3. Films, just like literary articles, are value-laden. The films revolve around gender roles and gender characteristics through characters as representations of life's realities, as they struggle through issues, conflicts, and expectations from each other and among the people around them. Their plight in surviving as men and women is depicted uniquely. Cultural awareness, gender equality, and equity are important features of a film that encourage people to be more culturally and gender-sensitive and embrace the diverse and distinct characteristics of culture and gender for the development of society.

Recommendations

1. Films may be used to advocate the importance of cultural sensitivity. This can be included in the criteria for the evaluation of instructional materials, particularly in writing modules and syllabi in English.
2. Continue to prioritize the significance of gender sensitivity in literary works. The love and respect for oneself, the family, other people, and the country may be

emphasized to inculcate self-worth, a strong sense of concern, and service to other people, particularly in this challenging situation of the new norm.

3. Film viewing may be utilized as part of the teaching-learning activity to increase students' awareness of cultural and gender sensitivity. In addition, script and literary writers may continue to uplift the important role of men, women, LGBTQ, or the gender type or role an individual has in society. Maintain and enhance information campaigns on cultural and gender sensitivity through the conduct of effective training and webinars on responsible module writing to ensure culturally sensitive and gender-fair instructional materials both online and in textbooks. However, more objective evaluations of instructional materials may be implemented in every private or public academic institution. Another study may be conducted to explore more on cultural and gender sensitivity which can be a combination of Asian, American, and Filipino Films to figure out another perspective and dimension of Cultural and Gender Sensitivity.

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